

December 1988

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THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.



**The pantomime of
Brent Council**

**Ludovic Kennedy
Enoch Powell
John Mortimer on
LOST LIBERTIES**

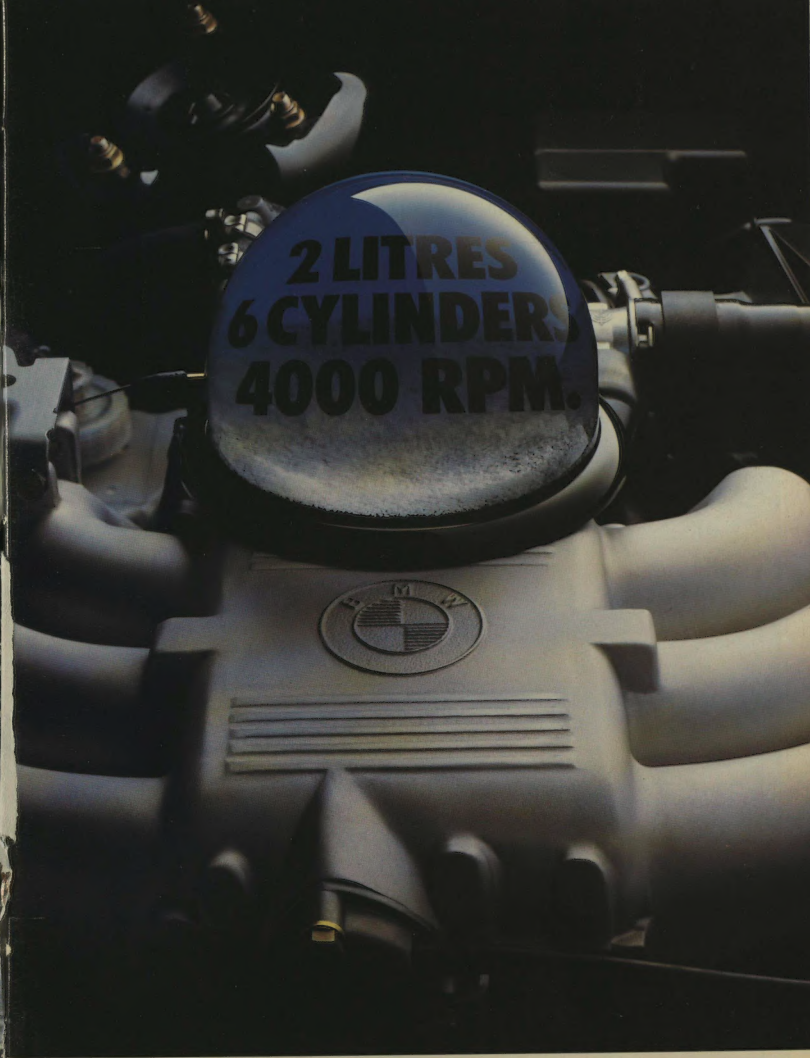
Janet Street-Porter

**The quiet raider
of Wall St**

**WINTER
DELIGHTS IN
LONDON**

**LONDON'S
FIRST LETTER
AD 110**

Delights: Coffee at Maison Sagne



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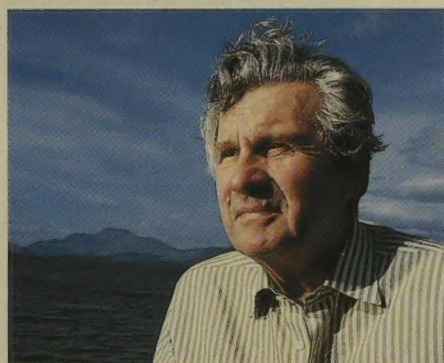
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Cover photographer: Kim Knott · Hair Peter Forrester for Daniel Galvin · Make-up Lucia · Model Simone · On location at Maison Sagne



Winter delights abound in London



Ludovic Kennedy on the loss of liberty



Livingstone in Brent's political jungle

40 Cover Story. Winter delights "Fog everywhere," began Charles Dickens in the opening chapter of *Bleak House*. "Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the fireside of their wards". Reading Dickens describing Victorian London in the grip of winter is one of the special pleasures of the dark months now upon us. Mulled wine, hearty breakfasts, frosty walks and birdwatching are among the great winter delights the *ILN* presents.

22 Liberty in danger What is happening to free speech? In the courts, in education, in broadcasting and private morality, everywhere the Government appears, quite literally, to be taking liberties. Ludovic Kennedy discusses the challenge posed by Mrs Thatcher's latest measures. His alarm is shared by Enoch Powell, Roy Hattersley, John Mortimer and the MPs Jonathan Aitken and Richard Shepherd.

28 What makes Janet run? Janet Street-Porter, the broadcaster and television executive, has one of the most recognisable faces in Britain and a voice which can belie her intelligence. As a recruit to John Birt's new current affairs regime at the BBC, she demands to be taken seriously. Mick Brown examines the career and personality of one of our most powerful media figures.

32 The Pantomime of Brent Scarcely a day goes by when Brent council in north London is not the subject of a news story detailing another débâcle. Brent's name has become a national byword for Labour idealism gone badly awry. Lewis Chester chronicles the descent into chaos.

46 The quiet raider from Wall Street The presence in the City of Joe Flom is causing unease in several boardrooms, for the American's modest demeanour belies his reputation as a ruthless corporate raider. Flom, revealed to Jeffrey Ferry how he and other American takeover experts are turning their attentions to Britain.

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December, 1988

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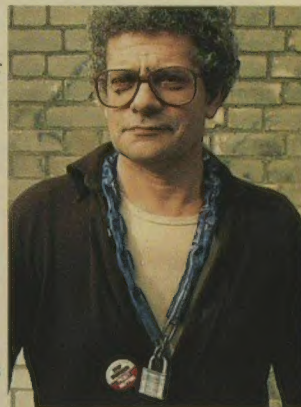
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he vague and windblown figure of the ILN contributing editor, Lewis Chester, materialises in my office every Tuesday morning. His arrival causes a silence to fall on the meeting which is interrupted only by the sound of Mr Chester divesting himself of a quantity of cycling equipment. Pumps, detachable lights, trouser clips, saddle bags and, when he is feeling security-conscious, the cycle itself, are all arranged while the gathering take a spellbound gander at what he is wearing.

By any standards his dress sense is remarkable, especially since he achieves a very individual look with such a limited wardrobe. Mr Chester has a flair for combining articles of clothing which one suspects have never been seen all together on the human form; for instance, the green track-suit trousers and the antique, oatmeal-coloured tweed jacket; the black sweatshirt with marsupial pouch; and a pair of corduroys which were once burgundy. Over these combinations he often wears a businessman's dark blue overcoat which looks as if it once got in the way of a column of soldier ants. For at the front there is a large bald patch which was, in fact, caused by a spill of car-battery acid. Otherwise, as Mr Chester points out, perhaps a little defensively, it is a perfectly decent coat.

Lewis Chester is remarkable for another reason. He is one of the best reporters in Britain, and he still outshines the snappily-dressed parvenus of the ever-expanding media. He spent 25 years on the *Sunday Times*, where he piloted some of the most complicated investigations into print, sometimes providing the material himself and at other times rewriting the incoherent scripts of reporters with less organised minds. It was for this reason that during Harold Evans's editorship he was frequently waylaid to work on the string of books that were thrown up by the paper's energetic inquiries. He co-authored *Hoax*, the tale of Howard Hughes's fake biography. *The Zinoviev Letter*; *Jeremy Thorpe: A Secret Life*; *The Fall of The House of Beaverbrook*; a biography of Onassis; and *An American Melodrama*. Lewis Chester is, in the Fleet Street argot, "a master of the long grope".

This month the ILN publishes his definitive account of the government of the London borough of Brent. The story of the surreal spirit that has moved Brent councillors and their associates to claim that the word "whitewash" has racist overtones, to brawl in their chamber, to refuse to pay rent to their own council, to allege that the Americans have invented a bomb that kills only black people, and to run their finances like a banana republic, has long been in the news. What Lewis Chester has done is to make sense of it all and to show how this sometimes brave idealism has resulted in a theatre of the absurd or, as we have called it, a pantomime. I am sure you will find it funny as well as enlightening.



Henry Porter



HOLD ON TO YOUR HAIG



A FINE OLD SCOTCH WHISKY SINCE 1627



Letters

■ **FEAR OF THE FUTURE** I was fascinated by Gilbert Adair's article on *The Age of Parody* (*ILN*, November) and I especially enjoyed his theory about the collective apprehension that accompanies these last years of the millenium. However, he seems to imply that every century suffers a period of apprehension, if not decadence, before the turn into the new century. Of course, this is not true. Only in the last century was there a *fin de siècle*. The end of the 18th and 17th centuries witnessed big events, but there was none of the static anxiety about the future which seems to afflict the end of the 20th century. Nonetheless, Mr Adair's views were very stimulating and well thought out.

Kevin E. James, Manchester University

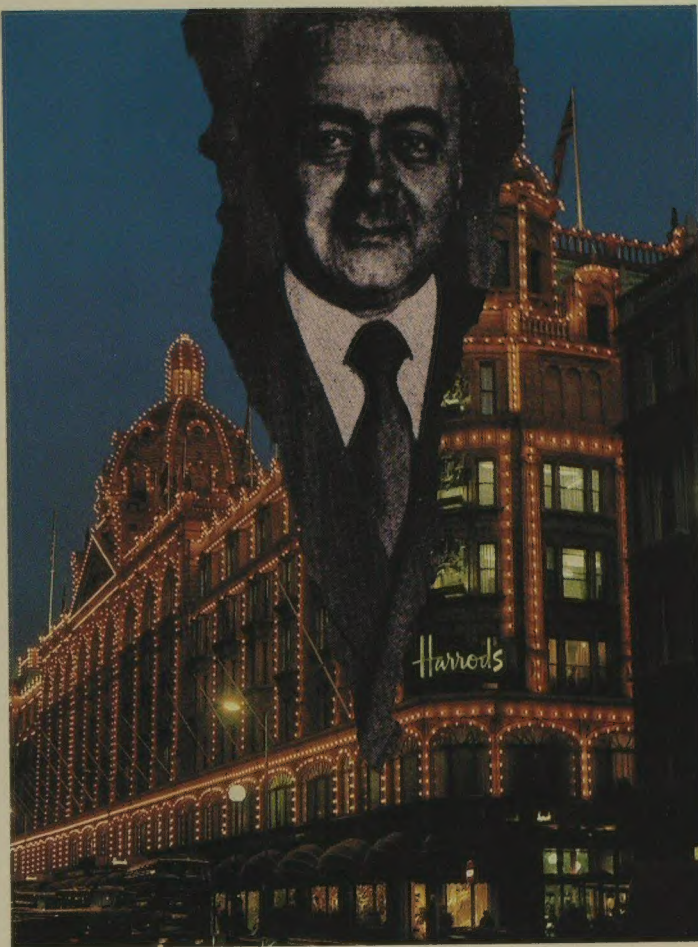
P.S. I wonder if your food correspondent could bear in mind that not all your readers have the time or the resources to search for juvenile carrots, newly-laid quail's eggs or young pig's trotters.

■ **NOTORIOUS TREND** In his otherwise excellent article, *The Age of Parody* (*ILN*, November), Gilbert Adair did not satisfactorily explain why Post-Modernism has been the predominant cultural trend of the 80s. After all, any age plunders its past. In the 60s it was fashionable to wear old-style military clothing. In the 70s there was a fashion for Oxford bags. So what is new? He would have improved his thesis if he had looked at contemporary popular music, which has so far run out of ideas that a very large number of records are made using the technique of "sampling", i.e. "borrowing" bits of other people's recordings. Because practitioners largely lift the "sound" of a record, rather than its tune or lyrics, it does not apparently breach copyright laws. But where does parody end and plagiarism begin?

N. Kalogieras, London W3

■ **COMPLAINTS BENEFICIAL** I am absolutely delighted that you should write the editorial "Causing a fuss" (*ILN*, October): I fully agree with your sentiments—a successful complaint certainly does improve the general lot! But very few people bother to complain.

I am certainly exercising my



mind and pen about the inexorable decline of London's Routemaster bus in favour of driver-only buses, particularly as so many Routemasters are being sold to other UK operators (e.g. in Manchester). Why is it that people outside London are demanding, and getting, conductor-operated buses and Londoners are selling them rather than keeping them?

Lester May, London NW1.

■ **CLEAN TACTICS** As one who continually "causes a fuss" by complaining, exhorting, badgering, writing and even (on one occasion) throwing rubbish off a tube-train on to a platform in a fit of pique, I am all for awarding a prize to similar plaintiff who manages to get through the "wet-wadding" of public indifference to bring about some improvement.

I am most usually viewed as drunk, drugged, or, at the very least, eccentric, at the mere hint of a "tut tut" when entering a muck-laden bus or tube-train. I am likely, before much longer, to become an

addition to the violence-victims' statistics and not, as at present, merely "an effing old bag".

Audrey D. Gardner, Maidstone, Kent.

■ **EAGER AMERICAN LAWYERS** I have just finished reading the article entitled "What Has Become of Harrods?" (*ILN*, October).

After describing Mr Alalouff's situation you quote him as saying: "My lawyers tell me to forget about it. A little man like me is powerless against a financial empire like the Al Fayed's."

We American lawyers never cease to be amazed at English law. Based on the facts of the situation presented, American lawyers would be lining up hundreds deep to take Mr Alalouff's case. Though you do not have contingency cases in England, we do, and this is how the "little guy" can fight the Al Fayed of the world.

It is a terrible reflection on the British Bar that no one would prosecute Alalouff's claims.

Robert M. Rosenthal, Los Angeles, California, USA

■ **INDISPENSABLE** My Swiss Army Knife is indispensable (*ILN*, October). During the course of a day I can use each blade for sharpening pencils or opening parcels. The tweezers remove splinters and the toothpick cleans my teeth. Each screwdriver and the wire stripper are used on a multitude of electrical apparatus, while the reamer bores holes for threading string through examination papers.

I have used the saw to trim dowelling for easel pegs and shelf-holders, measured lengths with the ruler, scaled a fish in the home economics class but never disgorged a hook. The scissors trim broken nails and cut book-binding paper, the file smooths jagged edges, and, at the end of the day, thanks for the bottle opener and corkscrew.

Mind you, I do keep the knife in my hip pocket, and if I've been sitting for any length of time, it does make an impression.

Alan S. Nipper, Librarian, Bedgebury School, Kent.

■ **STRONG LANGUAGE** I am a long-serving reader of the *ILN*, both at home and abroad. I consider it generally excellent.

However, I would like to protest most strongly over the use, in the October issue, of excerpts from books using a large number of obscenities. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and Redmond O'Hanlon's *In Trouble Again: A Journey Between the Orinoco and the Amazon*, are the books in question.

I imagine that losing one reader is of no importance to you, but I think that the people in your business sometimes lose touch with public taste. You might find that you lose many more subscribers.

Terry Kemp, Singapore.

■ **HIGH PRAISE** You are to be congratulated for the imagination, humour and interest brought to the magazine in the past 15 months. I am prompted to write by the new and most impressive style introduced in the November issue.

Michael Seymour, London W8

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Victory and defeat



A lesson in survival: British schoolchildren huddle in a rescuer's boat after the *Jupiter* sinks in Piraeus

► **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11** At the Conservative Party conference in Brighton, the Transport Secretary, Paul Channon, revealed that he had plans to introduce private roads. He said private companies might be asked to build and run toll roads and add fast-lanes to some of the country's most congested motorways.

During an address to the European Parliament on his hopes for a united Europe, the Pope was heckled by the Rev Ian Paisley who shouted abuse at him and unfurled a banner reading "Antichrist". The Northern Ireland Unionist was bodily expelled from the chamber by security guards.

► **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12** At the Conservative Party conference, Energy Secretary, Cecil Parkinson, received a standing ovation when he made an "historic pledge" to privatise the coal industry in the event of the Conservatives winning the next election. In response, NUM leader, Arthur Scargill said, "make no mistake, I will be around. I will be opposing privatisation."

► **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13** In a



Crossbeak and Bonnet defy the elements—with a little help from friends

unanimous decision by the five Law Lords, British newspapers were given the right to publish extracts from *Spycatcher*—the memoirs of former MI5 member, Peter Wright. However, the ruling was made only because "wrongful publication abroad" had rendered restraints in this country redundant. On the key issue of the lifelong duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown by members, and former members, of the security services, the

Law Lords backed the government, and they also ruled that any attempt by Wright to publish his book in this country could be opposed in order to prevent him from profiting from his wrongdoing.

In the second, and final, televised debate of the American Presidential campaign, Michael Dukakis failed to give the strong performance considered necessary to boost his position, and on the following day



Seeing stars: the Duke gets knocked out



The Shroud: medieval imposter

"There was a multi-million pound business in making forgeries during the 14th century. Someone just got a bit of linen, faked it up and flogged it"

Professor Edward Hall,
director of the Oxford-based research
into the Turlin Shroud

Republican George Bush emerged as the clear winner in the polls.

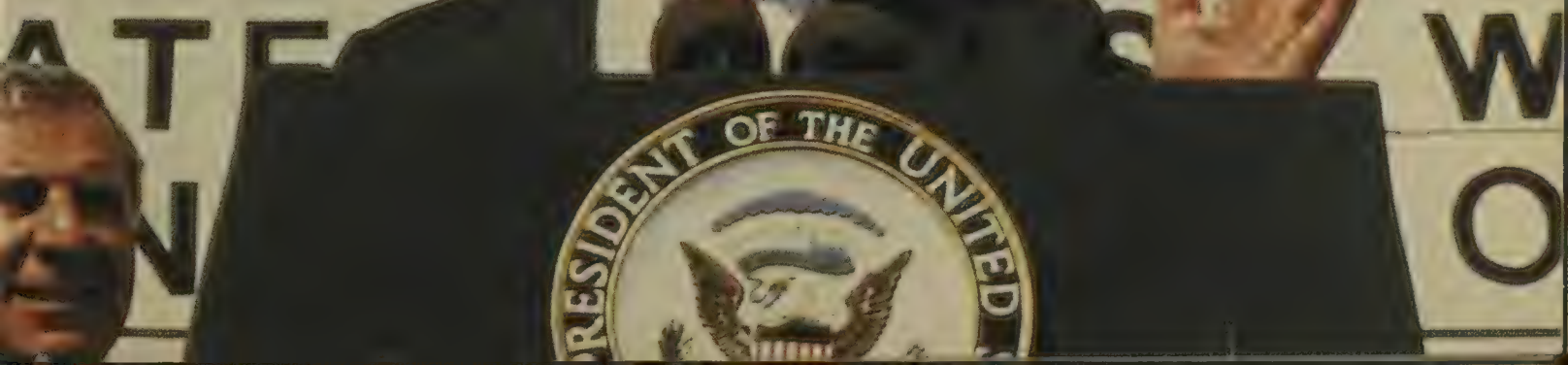
► **MONDAY, OCTOBER 17** 31 people were killed when a Uganda Airlines Boeing 707 crashed at Rome's Fiumicino airport. The pilot, hampered by thick fog, was thought to have mistaken the lights of a nearby road for the runway. Two days later, two more planes crashed on landing—in India's Gujarat and Assam states—claiming 165 lives.

George Bush's high hopes on the campaign trail were more than hot air. Vindicating the pollsters, he won the Presidential election, and the White House stays Republican for a third successive term.



American Exam

X R

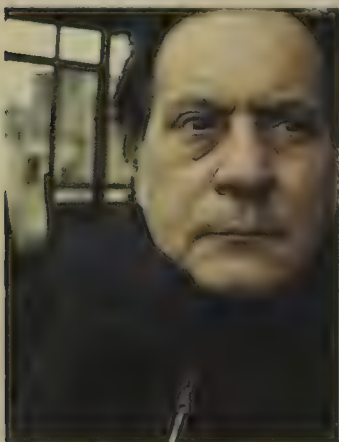


The 1988 Nobel Prize for medicine was awarded to Sir James Black of King's College Hospital, London, for his work in developing drugs to treat ulcers, and for pioneering "beta-blockers" which help prevent adrenalin from inducing heart attacks. He shared the prize with American researchers, Dr Gertrude Elion and Dr George Hitchings.

► **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18** Four employees at the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham were sacked for refusing to give up their trade union membership following the ban on unions made by Sir Geoffrey Howe in January, 1984. The sackings prompted spontaneous walk-outs by civil servants in London, Cardiff and Glasgow.

A property portfolio, including the Paternoster Square development near St Paul's which was attacked for its ugly architecture by Prince Charles, was sold by the Mountleigh group to a Venezuelan consortium for £317.5 million. The new owners, Paternoster Properties NV, are expected to go ahead with plans to redevelop the site.

► **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19** In a measure designed to thwart terrorist activity in Northern Ireland, the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, instituted a ban on the broadcasting of interviews with members of Sinn Féin and 10 other paramilitary organisations—both republican and loyalist. The ban, which was not extended to newspapers, was described as a "damaging precedent" by the BBC and was roundly condemned by



Portrait of the artist: Pietro Annigoni

broadcasters and opposition parties. A second measure—to be introduced in Ulster before the end of the year and possibly extended later to England and Wales—was announced on the following day: the right, under which a suspect's silence cannot be interpreted as evidence of guilt, was curtailed, allowing courts to draw whatever inferences they thought proper from the fact that the accused remained silent.

► **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20** The Secretary of Trade and Industry, Lord Young, announced that the 18,000



Poles apart? In Britain they would be, but in Gdansk Mrs Thatcher and Lech Walesa can demonstrate solidarity



Wreckage of the Uganda Airlines 707 at Rome, one of three planes to crash on landing this month

investors who had lost their savings when the Barlow Clowes company collapsed in June would not be compensated by the Government. His department, which renewed the company's licence in 1986 despite the suspicions of city institutions, had been cleared of blame by an independent report, he said. Conservative backbenchers reacted angrily to the announcement and the matter was referred to the Parliamentary Ombudsman for investigation.

► **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21** 390 English school children were rescued when their 10,000 tonne Greek liner, *Jupiter*, sank after colliding with an Italian freighter in the port of Piraeus near Athens. Many of the children were saved after jumping overboard,

but two crewmen were killed in the collision and two days afterwards a 14-year-old girl and a teacher were missing presumed dead. The captain of the Italian ship, Flavio Caminale, was detained by the Greek authorities on manslaughter charges.

► **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22** President Gorbachev described the independent Lithuanian Reform Movement, or Sajudis, as a "positive force which can serve *perestroika*", in a message relayed to its inaugural congress, held in the republic's capital, Vilnius. As a concession to the new movement, Algirdas Brazauskas, the leader of the local Communist Party, handed back Vilnius cathedral—used for 40 years as a picture gallery—to the Catholic church and on the

following morning some 20,000 people gathered to celebrate mass.

► **MONDAY, OCTOBER 24** The Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, announced that three Green Papers proposing radical reforms for the legal profession would be issued in the new year. The proposals, designed to increase consumer choice and competition, will include the possibility of allowing solicitors to become high court judges, and of permitting banks and building societies to carry out conveyancing.

► **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25** The biggest takeover bid for a British company, the £2.9 billion offer by South African controlled Minorco for Consolidated Gold Fields, was referred to the Monopolies Com-

mission by the Trade and Industry Secretary, Lord Young. He argued that a successful bid would give the company too large a share of the world markets for zircon and titanium.

"The whole of Polish society respects Mrs Thatcher, even loves her. But the Mrs Thatcher of foreign policy, not for the domestic affairs of Britain"

Solidarity leader, Lech Walesa, on the eve of Mrs Thatcher's arrival in Poland

► **WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26** Following his first summit with President Gorbachev, Chancellor Kohl of West Germany announced in Moscow that the Soviet Union would release all of its political prisoners by the end of the year. The announcement immediately raised questions of definition: while Western human rights groups estimate that up to 300 Soviet prisoners could be categorised as political, Gennady Gerasimov, a Soviet spokesman, said the numbers were "insignificant... let's say a dozen or two."

► **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27** The Social Services Secretary, John Moore, told the Commons that child benefit would be frozen for the second year running, but allayed a threatened Tory backbench revolt when he announced that an extra £70 million would be given to low-income families with children. Despite this compensation, however, it later emerged that the Government would still be making a saving of £130 million.

Charles Hawtrey, the star of 23 *Carry On* films, died in Kent, aged 73.

► **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28** Three Irish terrorists who conspired to murder Tom King, the Northern Ireland

Secretary, and other prominent people, were each sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment at Winchester Crown Court. The severity of the sentences was widely criticised, and lawyers for the accused launched an appeal, claiming the trial had been prejudiced by the announcement, during the proceedings, of changes affecting a prisoner's right to silence.

Two California grey whales, trapped for three weeks in Arctic ice near Barrow, Alaska, finally escaped to open sea after swimming through a channel cut for them by two Soviet ice-breakers. The huge rescue operation, in which the Russians and the US National Guard worked together, cost an estimated \$1 million.

► **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29** Pietro Annigoni, the Italian artist best known in Britain for his two portraits of the Queen, died in Florence aged 78.

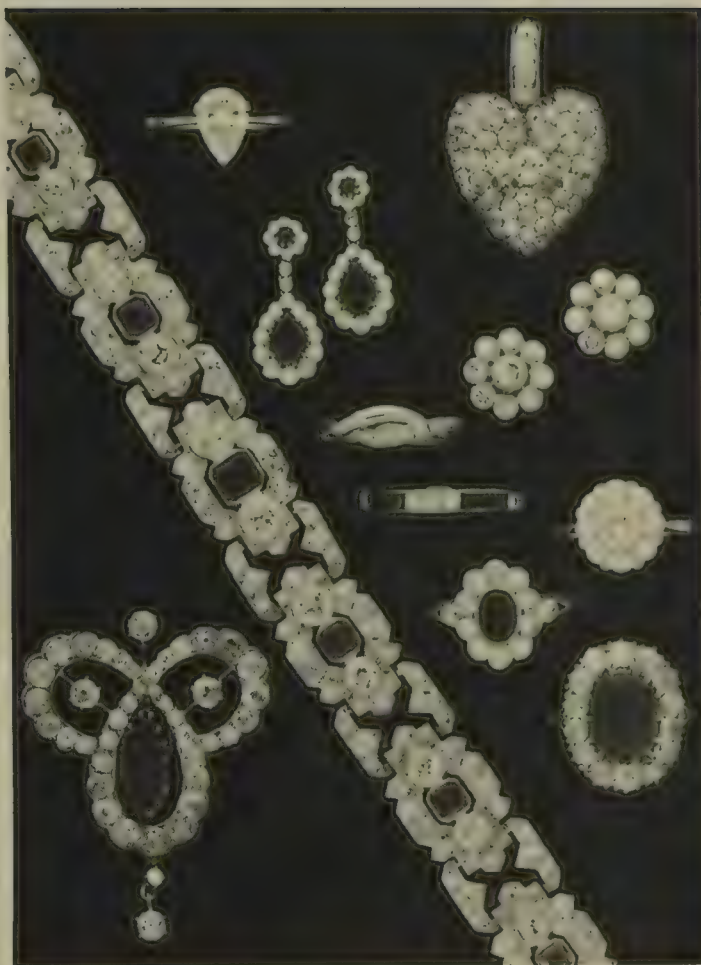
► **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1** While keeping total public spending for 1989-1990 at the £167-billion level set in January, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, announced in his autumn statement substantial increases in expenditure in priority areas, including an extra £2 billion for the NHS. Later, however, there was a serious backbench revolt when 30 Conservatives voted against eye-test charges, greatly reducing the Government's majority in both cases.

► **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2** The Prime Minister arrived in Poland, two days after the Polish government announced the closure of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk—the birthplace of Solidarity. The closure, ostensibly made on economic grounds, was widely regarded as political, but Mrs Thatcher ignored a warning from General Jaruzelski not to interfere in Poland's internal affairs and, at a banquet on the following evening, urged the government to partake in "real dialogue with representatives of all sections of society, including Solidarity". On November 4 she met Lech Walesa at Gdansk and laid a wreath with him at the Lenin shipyard in memory of workers shot down during the 1970 strikes.

Proof of the pudding

The *ILN* 100 years ago: December 22, 1888

I am prepared to admit that the steam-engine has accomplished great changes, great revolutions; but then, have they all been for the good? One may venture to hint that, quite possibly, the world might have done pretty well without it; but could the world, or at all events the English, which is a tolerably large portion of the world, have done without the plum-pudding? Where would be Christmas? For no one can conceive of Christmas without its pudding: 'twould be like Sullivan's music without Gilbert's libretto, or Mr Swinburne's poetry without its alliterations. But all will agree, I think, that Christmas is more important than the steam-engine; and as Christmas, I repeat, could not be without the plum-pudding—every boy and girl in the country would laugh you to scorn if you said otherwise!—it is clear that the said pudding is of greater value than the said engine.



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Health Departments'

YEAR IN THE UK FROM LUNG CANCER
Chief Medical Officers

Freemasons shown the book

A bidding war is developing among our national newspapers for rights to a book which is bound to create controversy when it is published next spring. This is the sequel to Stephen Knight's exposé of Freemasonry, *The Brotherhood*, an instant best-seller four years ago.

Knight died within 18 months of the book's publication, and bequeathed his notes to the author and television journalist Martin Short, best-known for his series on the Mafia called *Crime Inc.* Short is a man of strong opinions and admits he is less inclined than Knight to be fair to the Freemasons, whose influence over the police, the church and politics he has graphically documented in his 200,000 word book. "Fairness is not my main strength," he says, adding that what has particularly impressed him are the often devastating effects of Freemasonry on marriages. "At the end of my book, I have 25 letters from wives of Freemasons who write about what a marital block it is being married to a Freemason."

One chapter he and his publishers, Grafton Books, are currently withholding from would-be purchasers concerns MPs who are Freemasons. "To be honest, I'm scared of that stuff getting ripped off," Short says, "because I do name names." The Freemasons are coming under increasing public scrutiny. Recently seven Masons have been expelled after being convicted of serious crimes. Short is now capitalising upon the intense interest by making an ITV series drawing upon his book.

Hall's camera needs National collection

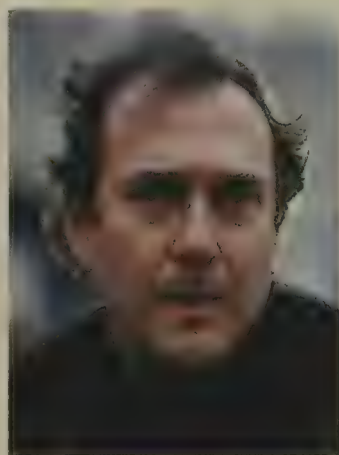
Some time before his farewell drinks party at the National Theatre last month, Sir Peter Hall was asked what he wanted as a leaving present. "Something small", Hall replied, "and no fuss".

After a moment's thought, Hall asked for a Hasselblad camera. There the matter rested until staff checked the price tag. A basic Hasselblad camera retails at about

£1,800, way in excess of anything even the most generous whip-round could produce. There followed some frantic backstage activity as the National tried to secure a discount. At one point Samuel Beckett, an old friend of



Sir Peter Hall



Richard Eyre

Hall's from the 50s, rang in and offered to top up a collection. However, it was Lord Snowdon who got the discount, and saved the day. Come the party, Hall, cheerily oblivious to it all, duly received the camera and waved goodbye.

The king is dead, long live the king! One of a clutch of new productions at the NT announcing Richard Eyre's arrival is Harold Pinter's long-awaited new play *Mountain Language*. No effort is being spared to humour Pinter, who is directing himself, and the play, despite its brevity (it lasts about 20 minutes give or take a few

pauses), has a star-studded cast and a full production budget. One indication of this obsessive attention to detail is the casting of The Hooded Man. This "character" appears, nameless, veiled and propped up, utters a few words in semi-darkness, collapses and is carried off. Paul Jesson, an established NT actor, was offered a contract extension of two and a half months to act the role. Understandably, Jesson demurred, but he mentioned the matter to his understudy who put himself forward. Three weeks later the reply came back from on high: "Harold doesn't feel you're quite right for the part."

Viz news

As one magazine falls, so another rises. In October, publishing giant IPC closed down *Riva*, the weekly women's magazine launched with £7 million backing, after only its sixth issue. In the same month *VIZ*, a humorous magazine originally published by two brothers from their parents' Newcastle home, announced it had sold out its print-run of 325,000 copies and is forecasting sales of 400,000 for its next issue in December.

Many *ILN* readers may be unfamiliar with *VIZ*, a kind of *Beano* for adults with an average age of 18 to 24. Its schoolboy rudery embraces characters with such names as Johnny Fartpants, Buster Gonad and Billy the Fish, a soccer goalkeeper who is "half fish, half man". But its unashamedly silly humour has many unlikely admirers. *Lawyer* magazine unexpectedly endorsed it as good reading for the smart, young legal eagle, and City yuppies travelling on the tube have been seen chuckling over its contents in much the same way that *Private Eye* was once enjoyed. Indeed, one of its greatest fans is Peter Cook, chief shareholder in the *Eye*.

VIZ is in no sense a satirical magazine like *Private Eye*, although

a story about Paul McCartney disappearing with all the proceeds from Live Aid had to be withdrawn after representations from Mr McCartney. Chris and Simon Donald, who started the magazine, promptly followed up with a ludicrous suggestion that McCartney had stolen a "granny's bottle of milk".

The London publisher, John Brown, whose company has the financial support of Richard Branson's Virgin, compares *VIZ*'s humour with that of the 'Carry On' films. "It's utterly British, and it blows a raspberry at the right time." Very few Americans, he says, begin to understand it, although there is widespread acknowledgement that it is a publishing success story. As proof, Brown's new offices are in a strikingly converted chocolate factory near the Harrow Road called "Canalot".

Following the example of *Private Eye*, *VIZ* has a thriving sideline in merchandising, and is itself the subject of emulation from magazines like *Poot*. There are now plans to adapt *VIZ* for television. But Brown is careful not to push his own views too hard: "I once told the Donalds that perhaps there was too much about bottoms and bodily functions, only to find in the next issue that they had introduced a new character: a bottoms' inspector."

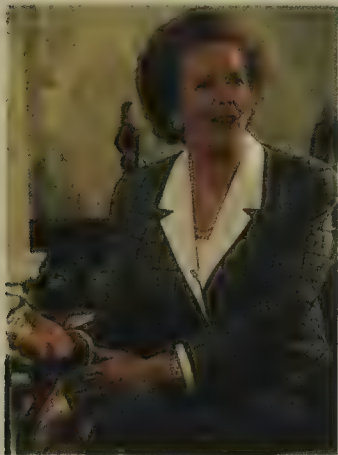
PM opts for new domestic policy

Three years ago, Lord Forte's daughter, Olga Polizzi, became the subject of unusual press coverage when a government minister, Norman Lamont, and an art dealer, Richard Connolly, were involved in a minor scuffle in which Lamont received a black eye. Nobody in the Government took much notice of the story, least of all Mrs Thatcher.

In fact, Olga Polizzi, who is the

42-year-old widow of the Marchese Alessandro Polizzi di Sorrentino, was soon afterwards employed by the Prime Minister to oversee the refurbishment of Number 10 Downing Street.

There are about four companies working on the decoration, which mainly involves the public rooms of Number 10. They have not been attended to since the Prime Minister took office in 1979 and were beginning to look a little worn. The work has been quietly undertaken since the spring and will cost the taxpayer about £300,000. The



Prime Minister

rooms will be completed early in 1989, but the refurbishment will not be unveiled in a formal way.

One or two advanced reports have leaked out and the impression they give is quite favourable. "Well, it could have looked like a cross between Trust House Forte regency style and a bachelor pad, but it doesn't. In fact, it's been sensitively done," said one of the people who have worked on it.

Most of the previous occupants of Number 10 have been unconcerned with the interior decoration, but Mrs Thatcher has as firm views on the choice of chintz, pelmets and upholstery as she does about other things in life. So the commission, which is believed to have come through Olga Polizzi's friend Lord McAlpine of West Green, has involved a certain amount of subtlety and tact.

This cannot have been easy for Polizzi, who is on the main board of Trust House Forte and is managing director of building and design for the Group. She has her own strong views. However it is believed that the Prime Minister has had her way and that Number 10 now very much reflects the taste that will one day pervade her house in Dulwich.

The terror at the Opera

For many years the staff of the Royal Opera House was unified by a certain self-love and an affection for their director Sir John Tooley. After his departure the single emotion that unifies the staff is an intense fear of Sir John's successor, Jeremy Isaacs.

While Sir John was flattering, cosy and benign, Isaacs is deemed to be aloof, slow to praise, ruthless and capable of a brief and cool destruction of individual effort.

He commences meetings with a stern dressing down and has ordered a review of the way that every department functions. The box-office staff are about to be reorganised, the plans for the controversial building development have been thrown out and he has cancelled the salary arrangements (previously staff could be paid in cash, which entailed an expensive security operation). People have fallen by the wayside, among them the technical director, Tom Macarthur, who left after a chilly meeting with



Jeremy Isaacs

Isaacs. What the staff fear most is that this is only a taste of things to come, and many are anxious about their jobs.

"Many recognise that things were a little too relaxed here," said one former employee. "What bothers people is his manner. He has to realise that this isn't ICI."

All this is a surprise to people who worked for Isaacs at Channel 4, where he was regarded as little less than a saint. So the conclusion that many Opera House observers are reaching is that Isaacs is simply reacting to what was a very pusillanimous organisation.

Duke looks to new realms

If not stated, it was always assumed that the royal family's taste for unorthodox speculations had come from the Queen's side of the family. It expressed itself in both the Queen and the Queen Mother's interest in homeopathy and in Prince Charles's admission that he talked to his herbaceous border and considered the writings of Jung.

The Duke of Edinburgh, on the



Duke of Edinburgh

other hand, was always perceived as being robustly sceptical. This may not be the case, since the Duke recently attended a lunch of mediums and other paranormal experts which was organised by the writer Brian Inglis and held by Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace. Of course, the Duke may have elected to attend the lunch to guard against ectoplasmic excess and to keep his son's feet firmly on the ground.

MPs in tears after a good whipping

The recent stirrings of revolt on the back-benches of the Conservative party have caused renewed interest in the functioning and behaviour of the whips' office. Even seasoned MPs were surprised at the extent of intimidation that has accompanied controversial legislation and there were rumours that one or two MPs had been reduced to a damp-eyed compliance.

This is new for the Conservative

party as one Tory veteran pointed out. "I mean they're using language which all begins with letters at the beginning of the alphabet. Now that never used to be the case. The Labour party had thugs, while we had gentleman who were capable of discreet persuasion."

The toughest enforcer from the whips' office is David Lightbown who is said by his defenders to be a family man with heart of gold. Others believe that his manner is more reminiscent of a warrant officer. He is said to have exceeded his brief in the treatment of Jerry Hayes, a young MP who made the mistake of quoting the Prime Minister's words when everyone else had conveniently forgotten about them.

Such was the force of his attack on Hayes, that the 1922 Committee of back-bench MPs has asked the whips' office to control the sweet-natured Mr Lightbown.

Will the real Maggie please stand up?



Princess Margaret

Princess Margaret recently visited Egypt to watch a performance by the London Festival Ballet, of which she is the Patron. Everything went swimmingly, including the inaugural evening of the new Cairo Opera House, however the Egyptian hosts were more than a little vague as to what position Princess Margaret held in British society.

Even those who should have known better believed that she was either the Queen's daughter or the Prime Minister. In the town of Luxor they commonly believed her to be both.



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LIBERTY IN DANGER

Recent government measures like the ending of some defendants' right to silence have caused widespread concern. The libertarian's case is outlined here, and over the page figures from all parts of the political establishment voice their fears

LUDOVIC KENNEDY

"We must be free or die who speak the tongue that Shakespeare spake, The faith and morals hold that Milton held..."

So wrote William Wordsworth nearly 200 years ago and yet today, many are now agreed, our freedoms are being increasingly eroded. "Liberty is ill in Britain," writes Oxford University's Professor of Jurisprudence, Ronald Dworkin, not a Britisher but a much respected American academic. "The very concept of liberty is being challenged and corroded by the Thatcher Government," he goes on, and adds that neither the Prime Minister nor her Government show the slightest dismay about it.

Those strictures front a series of articles on the same theme in the current issue of *Index on Censorship*, written by Roy Jenkins, Mark Bonham-Carter, Stephen Spender, Richard Hoggart, John Mortimer, Brian Wenham, John Lloyd and others. John Mortimer sums up their common complaint: "There is a determination in the Government to stifle unconventional opinion, criticism which it finds unwelcome, facts which it finds embarrassing... and to dismantle institutions which it feels unable to dominate".

Let us examine these charges and see how they stand up. First, broadcasting and Brian Wenham's claim that Mrs Thatcher seems hell-bent on cutting the BBC in particular down to size. Frustration has been felt by every government since television became part of the mass media. And it is understandable. To have to accept an organisation like the BBC which tells you, when you come to power, that you can only address the nation when it says you can, which frequently puts on very serious programmes criticising you and which then asks you for another increase in its licence fee, is not easy.

In the past, Prime Ministers swallowed their pride, recognised that the BBC's independence was the envy of the world, and did nothing. Not Mrs Thatcher. After the Peacock Committee had dashed her hopes of recommending advertising for the BBC (which would have changed its character entirely) the Government orchestrated a campaign attacking the BBC's integrity and impartiality. In current affairs reporting it is now a shadow of what it was. An additional

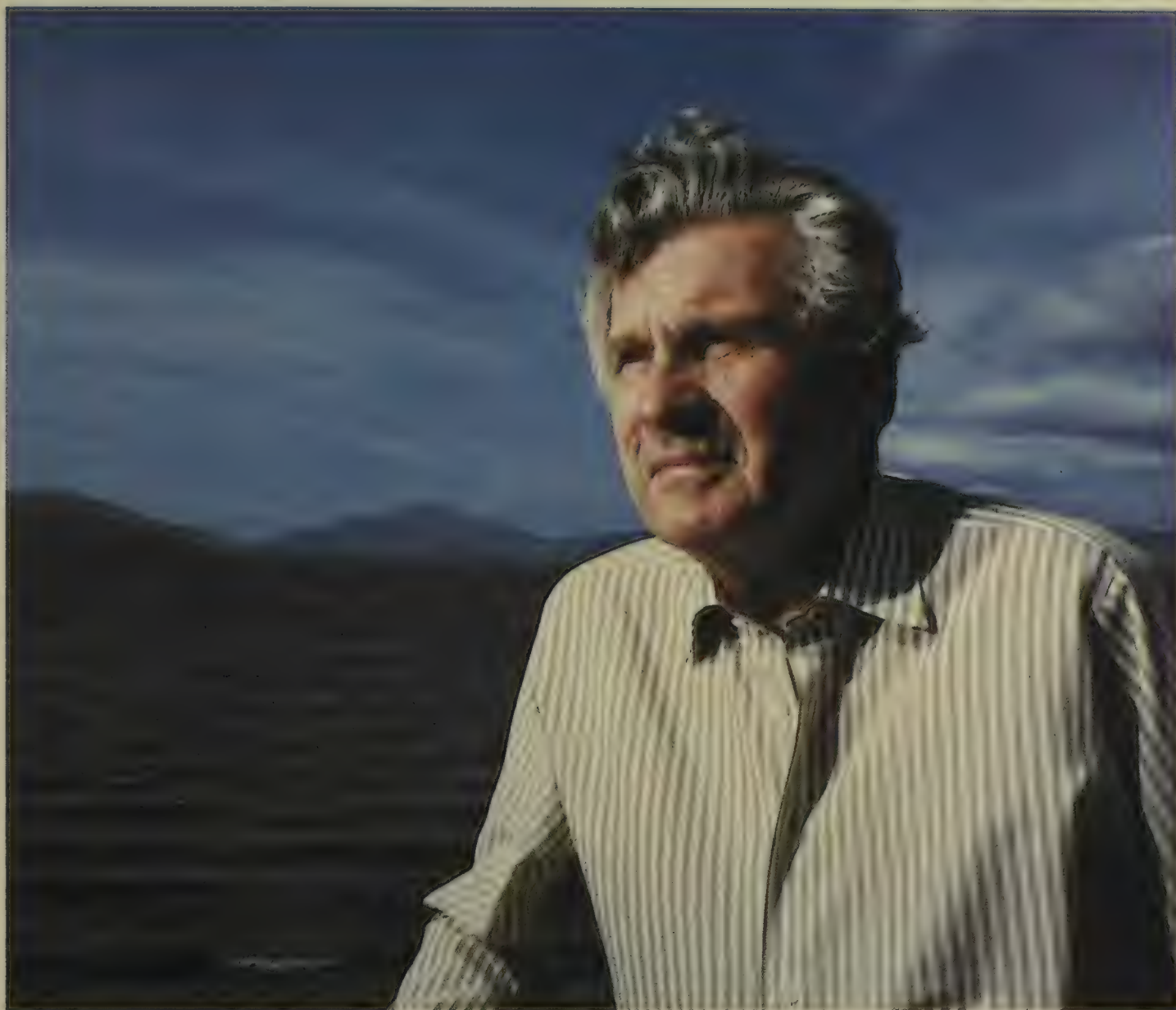
There is a determination to stifle unconventional opinion, unwelcome criticism and embarrassing facts

method of drawing its teeth has been, unprecedentedly, to politicise the Board of Governors by appointing new members more in tune with the Government's own thinking. The commercial channels are also to be brought to heel by the abolition of the Independent Broadcasting Association and the coming of deregulation which will inevitably lead to the making of very many fewer public service programmes.

In addition we are experiencing the heavy hand of censorship—the *Real Lives* and *Zircon* programmes being pulled before transmission, the absurd clamp-down on any discussion of the Peter Wright case, the appointment of Lord Rees-Mogg as chief censor of all imported fictional television material. More recently the Home Secretary has proscribed any television interviews with supporters of terrorist organisations—difficult to enforce and liable to be counter-productive. Will the proscription still apply if Mr Gerry Adams takes his seat in Parliament and makes a speech there?

Next, the White Paper on the proposed new Official Secrets Act. The whole emphasis on this is negative, not positive. Not how much, but how little, we can be told. Not a Freedom of Information Act, but a Preservation of Secrecies Act. If it becomes law, it will be harder than ever for malpractices in government to be exposed, for as John Mortimer says, "a civil servant or journalist could be sent to prison for exposing information which is perfectly harmless". Worse, "it will be no defence to argue that the disclosure has uncovered serious crime—so in these cases the Official Secrets proposals appear a mere licence for illegality". The only hope, he says, is that sensible juries will decline to convict.

Yet even as I write this, the Home Secretary has just announced that the Government is proposing to dispense with one of the most fundamental safeguards for the accused known in British criminal law—the right to silence. If interrogations in this country were conducted by paid magistrates rather than the police, as they are in the inquisitorial system in France, there would be no objection. But in our adversary system the police regard themselves as part of the prosecution process and there will be a very real



DAILY TELEGRAPH COLOUR LIBRARY

danger—and it has often happened in the past—of police putting words into a suspect's mouth which he or she has in fact not said. A danger, too, of a suspect saying something foolish in haste rather than be thought to have said nothing.

Third, gagging the voice of local government. "Throughout the 1980s," says Roy Jenkins, "the Government used every weakness of local government as a reason for making it weaker still and every act of political extravagance committed by a few local authorities as an excuse for also penalising the responsible ones and transferring still more power to the centre." As a result, London is now the only major city in the western world to be deprived of its own administration, while in educational affairs the role of local authorities is to some degree being transferred to schools and parents.

Another spoke in the wheels of local authorities has been the introduction of the infamous Clause 28 of the Local Authorities Bill which forbids a local authority to "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of the promotion of homosexuality" It will also be an offence "to promote homosexuality as a pretended family relationship", which means that a local official who speaks uncritically

Clause 28 is a classic example of the most dangerous and contemptible form of censorship

of homosexual relationships or stocks a book in the borough library in which homosexual relations are discussed will be liable to prosecution.

"Clause 28," writes Professor Dworkin, "is a classic, almost unbelievable, example of what has historically always been regarded as the most dangerous and contemptible form of censorship, simply disapproval of the contents of what is being said." As a heterosexual, I would have

thought it far better to encourage, even promote homosexuals to take up stable, permanent relationships rather than go in for the promiscuity to which so many of them seem prone.

Fourth, the diminishing of the role of the universities, under the Education Reform Bill, "seven years of squeeze followed by contract funding and the end of tenure," as Roy Jenkins puts it. Professor Dworkin claims the new Act will, "force the universities to become more integrated with national economic goals, to produce the teaching and research government and industry want rather than the critical, cross-grained unfashionable ideas great societies have expected their universities to provide in the past". As Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Jenkins fears "great damage to teaching, research, morale and students". It is a further example of the shift of power to the centre.

Fifth, the new curbs that have been placed on public protests by the little-known 1986 Public Order Act. Public protests like those of the Peterloo Massacre, the Jarrow march and the Suffragettes, have been the lifeblood of much social reform. Lord Denning has said that history is full of warnings against suppression of these rights. Yet the new Act is designed to

make public protests more difficult by giving the police additional disciplinary powers. For the first time they will require a week's notice of any demonstration, they can change its venue or disperse it at will (a demonstration against apartheid outside the South African embassy loses its point if shifted elsewhere) and they now have the additional weapons of charging with threatening behaviour and/or disorderly conduct anyone whose behaviour or conduct they think is likely to "harass, alarm or distress another". As the burden of proof, contrary to all tradition, is to be on the defendant, one can see what power the police have been given.

All of the foregoing adds up to a loss of personal liberties and a transfer of political power to

Freedom of thought and expression is so crucial that hard questions should be decided in favour of liberty

the centre hitherto unknown in British life. When a government has been in office as long as this one and has no opposition to speak of, the temptation for them to do whatever they wish to do, "to manipulate rather than manage" as Richard Hoggart puts it, must be very great. There could hardly be a better example of the truth of Lord Acton's saying about absolute power corrupting absolutely than that now being exercised. "No previous Prime Minister," says Lord Jenkins, "including Lloyd George and Churchill at the height of their wartime powers, has dominated the Cabinet to the extent of the present Prime Minister."

Let us end, as we began, with Oxford's Professor of Jurisprudence.

"The essence of liberty is not precise boundaries or mechanical tests *but an attitude*; that freedom of conviction, thought and expression is so crucial that hard questions should be decided in favour of liberty as far as possible . . . that government should bear the onus of demonstrating that *any* interference with *any* part of the information is really necessary."

Jonathan Aitken MP, Conservative Member for Thanet East and South since 1974

"I always try and remember parliamentarians are sent to the House of Commons not just to pass laws but to preserve liberties. That simple truth is apt to get forgotten by parliamentarians who stay in government a long time as ministers. I think the role of the libertarian back-bencher is always crucial in fighting some of these battles, particularly if a government increases in longevity. In general terms, I worry as various

government proposals that seem to be authoritarian or over the line are announced.

"I certainly think the official secrets legislation and the handling of it has been bad. The whole *Spycatcher* saga was totally over the top. On some of the measures against the IRA, I start



from a position of mild unease. But I think we are fighting a war against the terrorists and that normal civil liberties may not be applied. I am more sympathetic to the two recent measures on the right to silence

and the limitation of coverage, though I probably wouldn't have done them myself.

"It somewhat worries me that the recent intake of parliamentarians on Conservative benches has not yet seemed to have found its feet when it comes to preserving liberties."

The Rt Hon J. Enoch Powell MBE, formerly Conservative Member for Wolverhampton and Ulster Unionist Member for South Down

"I confess to being shocked by the appearance of light-hearted casualness with which long-established safeguards of the individual citizen in the law of our country are being chucked away without serious unease or debate inside or outside Parliament. The latest to be jettisoned is the right of the accused to silence.



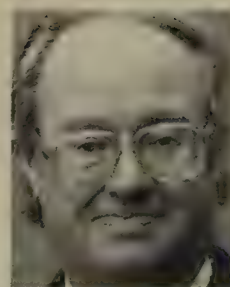
"There seem to be two causes at work. One is public alarm—always an unwise counsellor—about such things as drugs or terrorism. Mention these, and anything apparently goes. The other is the bad habit

of keeping a law reform Bill 'on the burner', into which Ministers can handily pop additional items without the proper necessity for prior parliamentary debate upon the principle, or indeed upon the details.

"As a former Northern Ireland MP, I cannot overlook the fact that having the power to legislate for that province by Order in Council after 90 minutes debate, the Government is getting into the bad habit of taking away individual safeguards in Ulster first and then claiming blandly to have a precedent."

John Mortimer QC, Playright and Barrister

"What particularly worries me is the attack on the jury system, which I believe is next to come. You can already see the right-wing press preparing its case by finding figures that show that juries are expensive and cause long delays in cases, that they are on the whole opposed to the police and so forth. It is very much the same sort of campaign that preceded the attack on broadcasting, which began in the papers and was orchestrated by Mr Tebbit. The point about the jury system is that 'it is the lamp that shows that freedom burns'.



notice. It is indifferent. The political majority is untrammelled. It has no checks."

Richard Shepherd MP, Conservative Member for Aldridge Brownhills since 1979

"The ban or limitation of coverage on still legitimate political parties is deeply worrying. I think the proposition of banning the spokesman of a lawful political party is outrageous in the context of British democracy. There are also many other things to be worried about; the public's right to know when the RUC fails to hold an inquest



when a young boy is shot accidentally; the right to silence being ended by the government is serious, for a defendant's silence may now be construed by the court to mean a person is guilty and has something to hide.

And when it comes to the secrets legislation, it is very wrong that a public interest defence will not be allowed. Surely it is right that a jury are told why a person may have broken legislation.

"You have to remember that I am speaking as an innately conservative politician. Those of us in the House of Commons who speak in this way are not covered because of the indifference of the popular press, but what we are worried about is that Britain is losing a lot of the freedoms that it has gained in the long march to a parliamentary democracy which was the envy of the world.

"This is the job of the backbencher and we should be able to say these things and go on saying them without being accused of being disloyal. We should also receive more coverage than we do, because we are representing the libertarian interest."

Roy Hattersley MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party

"This government is careless of the importance of our civil liberties.



Because they have no innate commitment to them, they are quite willing to see them eroded if it is politically expedient to do so. The forthcoming broadcasting white paper and official secrets bill will be further signs of the willingness of this government to sacrifice the rights of the individual and the entitlement of a truly free press, and it is my fear that, as and when it is to their political advantage, this government will continue to undermine the rights of the individual."

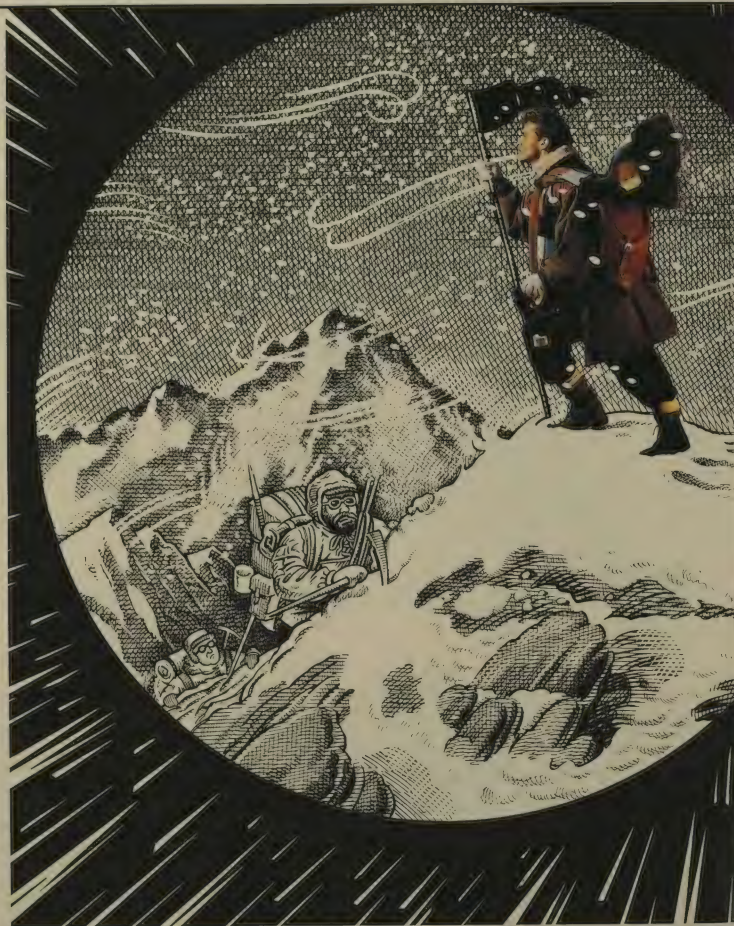


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WHAT MAKES JANET RUN

MICK BROWN



"The classic mistake," Janet Street-Porter once said, "is to equate my voice with my intelligence. I may be many things, but I'm not stupid." It is a revealing statement. The Voice, squawking Fulham Broadway meets Full Blown

Media Brat, is indeed remarkable and has been Janet Street-Porter's calling card. In the early 70s, when she first emerged as a broadcaster on radio and television, The Voice was a cause of public complaint; taken in tandem with The Hair, The Teeth and the Glasses, it became a badge of recognition, readily available to any impressionist, always a sign of arrival.

But you do not become the head of BBC television's Youth Programmes department, her current role, if you are stupid. Besides, few people would seriously think it of Janet Street-Porter and it is a mark of her sensitivity that she believes they would. This sensitivity, which may be further measured by the fact that she keeps a special file dedicated exclusively to unfavourable press cuttings, is a curious thing, a disconcerting sign that Street-Porter does not fully understand the world she has created for herself. There are two anecdotes which have some bearing on this.

The first concerns a journalist who was once preparing a profile on Street-Porter. In the course of lunch, he happened to invoke a perennial reference to her as, "looking like a traffic light and talking like a Tannoy". With moist eyes, she protested at how hurtful that was. Moved at her plight, the repentant journalist prepared a more chivalrous profile. The second anecdote concerns her home. For many years she had lived beside the Thames at Limehouse, in a Georgian house which had accommodated a succession of varying enthusiasms: an extensive collection of teapots and art deco objects; a full-size snooker table; and three husbands. (It is always the men who have left, not Street-Porter).

Some three years ago, tiring of riverside life, Street-Porter laid plans to have a house built for her in Clerkenwell. It was to be, in many ways, the summation of Street-Porter herself: exhausting all her savings, reflecting her commitment to the New, the Invigorating, the Provocative. Designed by Piers Gough (a fellow student of Street-Porter's at the Architectural Association in the 60s and a close friend ever since), the house

*"Looks like a traffic light,
talks like a Tannoy." is
the way one writer saw Janet
Street-Porter, whose
distinctive appearance and
voice have made her one of the
most recognisable women in
Britain. Loved or
loathed, the BBC's Head of
Youth Programmes
will never endure anonymity.
How far will her apparently
limitless ambition carry her?*

was eventually completed after an epic altercation with Islington Council over whether or not she should be allowed to have blue roof tiles rather than red. She got her own way.

The result is an unusual creation of geometric shapes and lattice-work embroidery. Gough says it was designed to reflect Street-Porter's personality: "uncompromising, with a brash exterior but a warm heart." And yet it has caused trouble.

When the *ILN* published a photograph of the house in an article on the gentrification of Clerkenwell, Street-Porter complained about violation of privacy. She took to task *Vogue* and the *Observer* for the same reason, the latter after that paper's architectural correspondent, Stephen Gardiner, had written a hostile critique which, she claimed, had alerted "the nutters" to the whereabouts of her house. This is very curious, for Street-Porter has spoken often and loudly about her home adding to London's architectural heritage. While building it, she and Gough assured suppliers that the house would become much talked about.

Janet Street-Porter's role as head of BBC television's new Youth Programmes department brings with it a salary of some £60,000. It is a role that has been fashioned especially for her: an attempt by the Corporation to tackle and

appease television's most demanding and elusive constituency—the 16-25 year-old age group—a role which Street-Porter would seem supremely equipped to fill. Now 41, she has always been, in some indefinable way, associated with youth. Indeed, Janet Street-Porter, by her own admission, is The Girl Who Refused To Grow Up.

She greeted the arrival of her 40th birthday with the statement that it made no difference: "I am still as childish as I always was, still as self-centred, and I still have the same hair." Later, she could be heard to elaborate: "I don't think my agenda's changed. I'm still just as riveted by the most trivial things. I have the mentality of someone with no responsibilities, who's completely self-centred and has spent their life doing what they wanted to do—so it's easy to have the mentality of a spoiled teenager." These are not qualities which everyone would admit to quite so cheerfully, and it is a mark of Street-Porter's self-confidence that she does so.

She was born Janet Bull, the daughter of an electrical engineer, and grew up in Fulham and later the lugubrious London suburb of Perivale. As a child, she was bright but unruly: the sort of girl who would worry her mother by coming home late from nightclubs. Her original ambition was to become an architect. Lacking the necessary A-levels, she nonetheless found her way to the Architectural Association. Strong on imagination, but without technical skills she then drifted into journalism, as the fashion editor of a teenage magazine, *Petticoat*.

It was at this time that she met the photographer Tim Street-Porter. Their marriage was a propitious event, giving Janet Bull a name, and by extension a persona, which she was able to employ after her marriage had dissolved; although this first husband has shown occasional annoyance at the continued use of the name. She moved on to become a newspaper columnist and fashion editor of the London *Evening Standard*, finally coming to broader public attention in 1973, when she co-presented a programme for the infant LBC radio *Two In The Morning* with Paul Callan. Her Cockney accent brought a flood of protest and publicity.

It was television, however, which was to provide her most obvious platform; wedged awkwardly between Clive James and Russell Harty in the late night chat show, *Saturday Night People*; bantering with Michael Aspel on the *6 O'Clock Show*; presenting the youth reportage *London Weekend Show*, where she had the distinction of being among the first to put their finger on the



GEORGE SNOW

punk-rock phenom and, ultimately, moving behind the scenes, co-devising the award-winning *Network 7* with TV director Keith MacMilick and Jane Hewland, LWT head of features and current affairs.

She had, by then, exhausted two more husbands: Tony Elliott, the proprietor of *Time Out*, and the film director Frank Cvitanovich. Her relationship with Elliott caused a revolt among staff at *Time Out* magazine when, in 1975, she

was appointed as editor of a companion publication *Sell Out*, allegedly in breach of an agreement about staff consultation. Staff accused her of having a "contemptuous and authoritarian manner, laying down the law, and not being able to enter into discussions." Elliott argued that with her experience and contacts, Street-Porter was in "quite a different league from all the others." They married shortly afterwards, but the marriage lasted only nine months. Street-

Porter and Elliott remain good friends however, and she nursed him through a difficult drink problem a few years ago.

Her subsequent marriage to Cvitanovich ended when he came upon her in a restaurant with Tony James, one of those bright sparks with an eye on the main chance with which the pop business abounds. James has a first in maths from London University, which he kept quiet about during his days with the punk-rock group



Protective and mellow with Frank Cvitanovich



Glamorously aloof with pop promotor Tony James



Frlivolous and fun with musician Ray Mayhew

'I'm riveted by the most trivial things. I have the mentality of someone with no responsibilities, who's spent their life doing what they wanted—the mentality of a spoiled teenager'

Generation X, but which proved useful in orchestrating the hype around another group, Sigue Sigue Sputnik.

He is a foot shorter and some years younger than his partner, but in every other respect they are the perfect match. His purple pony tail (sometimes worn under a bowler hat) colour co-ordinates fetchingly with her red plumage. He likes cooking, she doesn't. Both are fitness freaks who, improbably, enjoy walking the Pennine Way in oilskins. Both are ferociously ambitious.

There is considerable evidence that she is greatly loved, and loving. Her friends, drawn primarily, but by no means exclusively, from the media and the residue of 60s glitterati, tend to be longstanding and loyal: the dress designer Zandra Rhodes, her hairdresser Keith at Smile, Piers Gough, the tv producer Verity Lambert. In her autobiography, Rhodes writes touchingly of bucolic weekends in the 60s spent with Street-Porter and her first husband Tim at a country house in Wales, baking bread and listening to the Archers, "with Janet and me knitting away or patching and embroidering our dungarees".

Street-Porter works assiduously to maintain friendships, with birthday cards and snapshots. In turn her friends pay tribute to her immense loyalty, her perfectionism, boundless curiosity and enthusiasm. "Janet is not afraid of having an opinion about something that is new or different," says Verity Lambert. "She's not someone who's told what to think."

It is the feverish commitment to novelty which makes Street-Porter so peculiarly suited to her task in engaging the stunted attention-spans of the 16-25s. "There is a bit of Janet Street-Porter's mind that is a bit like that of a 14-year-old," says her erstwhile colleague, Jane Hewland. *Network 7* forged a departure from the conventions of youth television: a frantic jumble of items on everything from pop music and youth cancer to the sex lives of soap queens, framed in vertiginous camera angles, with captions skidding willy-nilly across the screen, all set amidst a detritus of post-apocalyptic technology.

Somewhat fancifully, Street-Porter described it as, "aspirational television. That kind of show shouldn't be too easy to understand; it ought to be television you can boast to your friends that you fully understand, even if you didn't. *Network 7* was a kind of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* of factual television."

The agenda at *Network 7* was set very much by Street-Porter's own enthusiasms: nightclubs, pop music, fashion, all and anything that glittered brightly. Colleagues despaired of engaging her with more serious issues, devised an imaginary 'Network 7' map of the world in which Russia (very trendy), Japan (lots of electronic toys) and Soho loomed extraordinarily large; the North of England, Bulgaria, and anywhere else deemed boring were hardly visible. She has personified its success, according to former colleagues. "Let's put it this way," says one of them, "she doesn't disillusion people if they think it was all her job."

Street-Porter's appetite for the look and feel of things, sometimes at the expense of their substance, produces an odd dichotomy. Says Tony Elliott, "Her private tastes are often very

sophisticated—she has supported people of huge quality—photographers, furniture makers, writers, painters—but that hasn't always followed through in what she does herself."

If she has the adolescent's impatience, susceptibility to tantrums, the burning wish to get her own way, she also has more grown-up attributes—an engaging charm and gregariousness which 14 year-olds normally lack, as well as tenacity and ruthlessness. It has become endemic to her own self-mythology that she is pushy, a "can-do" person. She arrived at the BBC pleased that she had had to "kick a few asses" to get her way. "If you hire someone who has a high profile, then you want action. You don't want someone who is going to sit back and do nothing."

Colleagues note that this abrasiveness has been tempered somewhat in the areas at the BBC that really count. It was a source of some amusement to more seasoned colleagues that on arriving at the BBC she had difficulty navigating her Mercedes around the spiral driveway of the staff car park, and in accepting that the ground floor was reserved for the disabled and Very Important People. Altercations resulted. BBC politics dictate that you never upset the man at the gate and a compromise has now been reached.

"I'm not a stropky cow," she says. "I get along well with people and I think people like working with me."

Her first commissions at the BBC have included *DEF 11*, a magazine programme on the lines of *Network 7*, but with less of the trivialising, self-promoting tabloid feel, and *The Rough Guide to Europe* series of travelogues. This idea was lying around in the bottom drawer at *Network 7* almost from the outset. Indeed, her detractors claim that two other forthcoming programmes *The A-Z of Religion and Reportage*, are the fruits of *Network 7*.

She is defensive about the use of the term "youth programming." That sounds too much like a ghetto. She has said, "I'm interested in programming aimed at a certain mentality, if you like."

Quite what that mentality may be, she has not yet spelt out. Friends say she is determined to rebuff accusations of "trivialisation" and make programmes which mirror a deeper, more acute intelligence. But it is because of the way in which she conducts her life, like a perpetual adolescent, demanding that the world amuse her, that she most embodies what conventional wisdom believes is the teenage viewer of today and the adult viewer of tomorrow. Her future as an architect of television is assured. She has chosen the power of the producer over the glamour of the presenter.

Janet Street-Porter may seem transparently obvious, yet the impression that actually endures is rather of a curious opacity. When asked whether Janet Street-Porter inclined to the left or right politically, a close friend confessing that she had no idea at all. It begs a recurring question: What, if anything, does Janet Street-Porter actually believe in? Other, of course, than Janet Street-Porter ■

Mick Brown is a staff writer for *The Sunday Times*. Janet Street-Porter will chair next year's Edinburgh International Television Festival.



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CENTURIES CROFT HAS BEEN THE
RIGHT PORT TO DRINK



THE PANTOMIME OF BRENT

The Labour controlled council of Brent has become a symbol of political folly and eccentricity. While the finances and services slip into chaos, its councillors dream, plot, brawl, and debate whether the word "whitewash" is racist. Lewis Chester presents a full and sometimes hilarious history of Brent's affairs.

The man described as the Pol Pot of London politics is a sweet-tempered West Indian who makes an evil cup of coffee.

"Sorry about that," said Dorman Long, the 51-year-old leader of Brent Council, seeing me wince at the first sip, "I like it strong and I tend to make it that way for others."

What Long and his Labour colleagues have been doing for others has put the council at the pinnacle of London's unpopularity league, and no critic has been more severe than Ken Livingstone, MP for Brent East and the borough's most potent phrase-maker. Livingstone said Brent Council was "being secretly run by Pol Pot following a municipal version of the Year Zero strategy".

Long takes this kind of stuff on the chin, though he did think reference to Pol Pot, the blood-thirsty leader of Cambodia's Khmer

Rouge, was a bit rough. "To be honest with you, I can't remember when I last committed a murder or organised an atrocity," he says.

His neighbours in Roundwood, one of Brent's poorest areas where Long raised his four children, have yet to glimpse any enthusiasm for blood-letting. The same is true at Lambeth's housing department where Long works a three-day week as a race relations advisor. Evidence of atrocity in the leader's room at Brent Town Hall is also scant.

Long did admit to one massacre however: the one he is imposing on services in Brent. The Labour Council, returned in 1986 with promises of massive expansion, now finds itself taking a scythe to all that it cherished in the schools, the nurseries and the social services. Children's and old people's homes are among the many institutions for the chop.

If the new emergency cuts—saving £17 million and losing more than 1,000 jobs—are not achieved, Long and his fellow councillors could well be surcharged and disqualified from office. While Liverpool and Lambeth took the surcharge route they did it as part of a bold policy of open defiance of the government. Brent has come to the brink with a more ostrich-like policy, hoping for the unavailing best and never preparing for the evident worst.

Long is saddened by this, but sees the cuts as being necessary to a return to "sensible policies". Some people, however, would argue that the rot goes deeper than economics and that sense has never been a characteristic of Brent politics. In the north of the borough, many old Tories say the fatal error was made in 1964 when Brent came into existence.

The new borough yoked together Wembley and Willesden. "A shotgun wedding," said Long, "with Willesden as the poor relation". Wembley, staid, middle-class, had a Conservative tradition dating back to the 1930s. Willesden, primarily working-class, was a Labour stronghold acquiring a multi-racial complexion as immigrant settlers moved in. Among them was the young Dorman Long, fresh from St Lucia in the Caribbean. He went to work on the buses.

From the beginning, Brent politics were touchy. The two sides of the borough, geographically divided by the North Circular Road, rubbed each other up the wrong way more frequently than they rubbed along. Efforts to house the poor of Willesden in the more luxurious pastures to the north met with loud cries of "desecration" in Wembley. Many Tory canvassers would knock on doors and, when a black face appeared, say: "Oh sorry, wrong house."



Dorman Long, left, Labour leader of Brent Council, criticised by Brent East MP, Ken Livingstone



Debates, even on non-party issues, could be combative. On one occasion the council deferred other business for an intense discussion of the proposal that Brent should refuse to join the rest of Britain in the switch to British Summer Time. Yet there were homely aspects to the enterprise. During another passionate debate, the Labour chairman (in today's anti-sexist Brent he is called "the chair") could be observed with his arms raised as his wife fitted him with a pullover she had been knitting in the public gallery.

Education, the number one issue nowadays, was a battleground even then. There was excellence in the schools but most of it tended to be of a sporting nature—Luther Blissett, the black England striker, and Mike Gatting, England's former cricket captain, were both formed by the Brent education system.

The dawn of Thatcherism failed to curb the borough's eccentricity; indeed, the 1980s were to provide Brent with its wackiest decade. Brent was usually Labour-controlled but it was often a close-run thing and never closer than in 1982 when Labour found itself in charge only by virtue of the mayor's casting vote. One defection and they were out.

The defection came a few months later, when Mrs Ambrosine Neil, a black councillor, expressed dissatisfaction with Labour's education policy for black children and went over to the Tories. In those days the Labour group ran a peripatetic Council which toured the schools so that the young could see live action civics. When the Tories, armed with Mrs Neil's vote, tried to take over the Council at Willesden High School, flying eggs and punches filled the air. The repulsed Tories made it to power a week later, arriving by coach under heavy police escort.

The next three years of Tory rule, with three Liberals holding the balance, had a deceptively calm appearance. The Tories lauded themselves for keeping the rate steady and maintaining services, but there was a significant hidden cost.

To keep the rates down they indulged in creative accountancy on a grand scale. Odran Steed, then, as now, Brent's director of finance, said: "Re-scheduling of debt, capitalisation of housing repairs and any other kind of repairs, suspension of payment to the capital fund,

writing down provisions for bad debts, writing down balance to insurance fund—you name it, we did it. You could say things started getting a little bit out of hand then." At the same time, balances of £37 million which had been inherited from Labour and were the Council's buffer against times of trouble, had all been used up.

When Labour was returned to power in 1986 they inherited a budget that was almost £10 million in deficit. It was the point at which the empty purse met the cornucopia of promise. "Do you know," said Dorman Long, who is sometimes criticised for being honest to a fault. "I estimate that fulfilment of all our manifesto pledges could cost another £200 million." This would almost double the Council's existing £230 million budget.

Long was a critic of the overblown Manifesto—it ran to 70 pages—but it did not seem quite so absurd at the time. This was the era of high hopes, and the election victory had been a famous one. With 19 black councillors and 16

The council deferred other business to discuss whether Brent should refuse to switch to British Summer Time

women among its 43 members, the new ruling Labour group was reckoned to be the most representative of its electorate in the history of local government. Unfortunately, it may also have been the most inexperienced. No fewer than 22 of the Labour councillors were first-time members.

The group's leadership was predominantly black. Merle Amory, still only 25, was at the helm with an Asian deputy. Long served under them as chairman of the group. Despite her youth, Amory, who had once described a black Tory councillor as "a traitor to the black community", was a tough political operator. She had been deputy leader for four years and had a good grasp of London politics.

The Labour group's optimism was misplaced in assuming that their own victory would be easily reproduced elsewhere. It was this mistake that led to its much-criticised decision to plough £250,000 of pension fund money into the left-wing newspaper *News on Sunday*, a brief, ill-starred venture. Graver still was their misreading of national political scene.

Going the rounds of committee chairs in the early days, looking for spending curbs, finance director Odran Steed encountered a common refrain: "There's really no incentive." The euphoria was such that most councillors convinced themselves that a Labour government would be returned in the next year and that when that happened all promises would be kept, all debts would be paid and all tears would be dried.

To make matters even worse, Brent Council then provided the Tories with a stick to beat Labour with nationally. This was its much derided anti-racist policies. Within Brent itself the cause for derision is not apparent. Apart from having proportionately more Afro-Caribbean and Asian residents than any other local authority, Brent is also home to a large Irish community in Kilburn and a substantial Jewish population to the north. Taken together, the ethnic minorities in Brent add up to an ethnic majority of almost 60 per cent.

It seemed obvious that their lives should be as free of discrimination as possible, particularly when independent studies suggested that racism was a cause of backwardness in school and unfairness in housing allocation. In Brent anti-racism is not just a wet liberal notion but the stuff of real politics.

There was not much wrong with the policy, it was the implementation that went awry. The Council sought to redress the racial balance by appointing a battery of race relations personnel. Most of the money for such appointments came for the Home Office under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966, which provides for special payments to authorities with immigration problems.

There were soon instances of excessive zeal and complaints of "reverse discrimination", and not only from the whites. Noisy Asian demonstrations against alleged discrimination in jobs and services, by blacks and whites alike, culminated in an embarrassing "hunger strike" by Raju Patel on the Council's doorstep.

According to Roger Stone, leader of the minority Tory group, the policy tended to take over the political language. "Anti-racism became the be-all and end-all," he said, "anyone who disagreed with the Labour group was instantly branded a 'racist'. Though it had its funny side. I once mentioned something being a 'whitewash' in Council and I was asked to withdraw it as a racist remark."

But it was the McGoldrick case that made Brent nationally infamous. Maureen McGoldrick was the popular headmistress of Sudbury Infants' School suspended in the summer of 1986 for an alleged racist observation. She was said to have told a junior council official on the telephone: "I don't want any more black teachers." McGoldrick always denied making the remark.

She was cleared by the school governors, but Brent's education authority still wanted to mount its own disciplinary hearing. With the backing of the National Union of Teachers, McGoldrick fought a long and ultimately successful case for reinstatement.

By early 1987, Brent Council's persecution complex was fully developed. Of all the so-called "Loony Left" boroughs lampooned in the right-wing press in the run-up to the election, Brent emerged unassailably as the favourite target. The *Sun* described it as, "a Socialist republic where anything goes—just as long as it favours blacks and gays".

Horror was expressed at the Council for providing £4,000 for a party to celebrate the crowning of Elvis Johnson-Idan, head of the



Ambrosine Neil defected to the Tories over education



Roger Stone, left, leader of the Tory group and Merle Amory, Labour leader until 87 at odds over "racism"



Odran Steed, left, creative accounting under Labour and the Tories. Elvis Johnson-Idan, king of the Fanti



Hunger striker Raju Patel embarrassed the council



The case of headteacher Maureen McGoldrick brought Brent national attention

borough's parks department, who had become King of the Fanti tribe in his native Ghana. While such an event might be deemed a bit unseemly as a municipal beanfeast in rural Wiltshire, as an excuse for a rave up in a deprived, predominantly black area, it had a certain élan.

But even when allowances are made for distortion and exaggeration, it has to be said that Brent under Labour rule, while not exactly barmy, was definitely a very strange place.

Politicians excelled in the unapologetic style. The chair of education turned down a grant for a young girl seeking ballet school education on the grounds that, "ballet is a white middle-class occupation. We need more applications from sitar-playing Indians." Another committee chair was less than supportive when 400 gypsy campers descended on Kingsbury in the refined north of the borough. He was quoted as saying that it was the best thing to happen to North Brent in years, and that it would "teach the people of Kingsbury a bloody good lesson".

In the area of gender politics Brent reached for new frontiers with the recruitment of gay foster parents and school governors. Reasonable decisions to diversify the Council's advertising to show black, gay and lesbian people on a par with the traditional white family often went bizarrely astray. One poster, exhibited in Brent housing offices, showed a black person burning to death while white neighbours ignored his cries.

On the other hand, Brent's much-derided anti-nuclear policies were not as daft as they

**The council provided
£4,000 for a party
to celebrate the crowning of
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head of the parks department,
who had become
king of the Fanti tribe**

looked. Trains transporting nuclear waste from Dungeness on the south coast, Sizewell in Norfolk, and Bradwell in Essex, all converge at Willesden Junction before going on to the processing plant at Sellafield.

Anti-racism was often identified as the reason why the Council could not hold its talent. Brent had managed to achieve London's highest turnover of senior council staff, some 77 per cent in three years. While much of this problem predated the Labour administration, the new regime gave it a heightened profile. Officials went a lot less quietly.

Adrian Parsons, their first director of education, moved on complaining of political interference and warning of "the dangers of inverse racism". His successor, Michael Stoten, was

accused of "blatant racism" when he argued that the black candidate for a local headship was insufficiently qualified.

The school system was riddled with absurdities. A Conservative governor on a school panel interviewing a black applicant found herself accused of "racist body language" when she looked at her watch. The interview had to be held again.

A bigger problem was the new style of activist school governor. Among their number was Kuba "Burning Spear" Assegai, who became prominent on the boards of Willesden High and Sladebrook High. When not striding into classrooms unannounced, Assegai could most often be found in the Town Hall giving the Labour leadership the benefit of his fervent opinions although he had no role in the Council. Even those in serious disagreement tended not to argue much with Assegai who weighs in at 18 stone and is 6 feet 5 inches tall. He would sometimes go about with attendants of similar stature.

Assegai was part of the Black Teachers' Collective, which aimed to improve black representation in the schools. Only 300 of Brent's 2,800 teachers were black. The BTC included several influential figures in the borough, including Soonu Engineer, the race advisor to the education department who took a hard-line stance in the McGoldrick case.

From the outset, however, there were those, and not only whites, who perceived Assegai as the bully-boy face of anti-racism. After a while he

went too far. When told to leave a Labour group meeting, Assegai called two women councillors "prostitutes" and threatened to hit a third. To the startled pupils of Willesden High he announced that America had developed a new type of ghetto blaster—an "ethnic bomb" capable of killing only blacks.

Even the most fervent anti-racists on the Council began to recognise that Assegai was counter-productive. A motion was passed excluding him from public buildings in the borough because of his liberal use of threats and violent language but Assegai was to bounce back some months later after obtaining a High Court ruling that overturned the ban.

The election of May, 1987 which gave Mrs Thatcher a thumping majority, was a blow to Brent Council. It produced some interesting changes in the local political scenery. Brent had two new Labour MPs: Black barrister Paul Boateng in the south and "Red Ken" Livingstone in the east. Brent North remained the fiefdom of the maverick right-winger Rhodes Boyson. But hopes that Boateng, with his ethnic connections, and Livingstone, with his political street wisdom, might help put Brent Council back on course were never realised.

Social services in Brent were in a parlous state. Back in 1984 the department found itself exposed with the tragic case of Jasmine Beckford, a four-year-old who died after beatings from her stepfather which took place while she was under council care. Sentencing Maurice Beckford to 10 years' imprisonment for manslaughter, the trial judge summed up the role of the social workers as "naïve beyond belief". An inquiry headed by Louis Blom-Cooper QC described the death as "a predictable and preventable homicide". Morale in the department crashed and never fully recovered. One of the first moves of David Divine, a spirited young black appointed the borough's director of social services, was to try to identify the key problem areas. He persuaded the Council to invest £75,000 in a study by Bath University.

The researchers depicted a system in crisis. Conditions in old people's homes were generally "dreadful", administrative back-up for field workers was "completely inadequate", many day nurseries were "in a disgusting state" while case files, even where child abuse was involved, were "very poor". Almost every department had grave deficiencies. The Bath report did not claim that these deficiencies were exclusive to Brent, but said "it is their widespread nature in Brent which is so striking".

As in other London Councils, Brent's block grant from the Government had declined sharply—from 61 per cent of its budget when Mrs Thatcher was first elected, to 49 per cent by the start of her third term. The borough had also experienced being rate-capped and other means of raising revenue were looking increasingly threadbare. One of Merle Amory's first laments as council leader was that the Tories had already exhausted the range of "creative accountancy" techniques.

This was some way from being the case but, by the summer of 1987, the end was undoubtedly in sight. Odran Steed had two more deals up his

sleeve but his willingness to implement them was coupled with his increasingly loud appeals for spending cuts. Creative accountancy might buy a "breathing space" he said, but it could not restore health to the system. A finance report to councillors that summer begged for "a change of culture from anything goes to everything is questioned".



Kuba Assegai regularly harassed Council meetings

People tended not to argue with Assegai who weighs 18 stone and is 6ft 5ins. He sometimes went about with attendants of similar stature

Brent Council tried, in its way. In September the Labour group went through an anguished economy exercise, cutting overtime and blocking both new appointments and new spending. The cuts saved £7 million—not nearly enough.

At this time other Labour boroughs in London were digging in for five more years of Conservative rule by making huge economies. In Haringey the cuts package was £45 million, and in Lambeth it was £60 million over six months. Camden and Islington conducted similar operations observing what became known as the "dented shield" policy—retreating from confrontation with the Government but in good order. Unlike Brent, these boroughs had all read the warning signs.

The reasons why Brent Council kept its head stuck in the sand were partly financial but mainly political ones. A few weeks after its modest cuts exercise, Merle Amory resigned citing "personal reasons", and the group was plunged into a rancorous and all-absorbing leadership battle. There were five contenders initially, of which two emerged as frontrunners—Dorman Long and Ron Anderson, a 37-year-old science teacher with strong left-wing credentials.

Long was hardly fresh news. A councillor for almost 15 years, he could even remember the

dear, dead days "when the Labour group had its rows in private, and stuck to the majority decision in public". He was not known for any great oratorical skill. His politics were deemed conventional, almost old-hat. Anderson was the clear favourite.

Anderson, a Liverpoolian who had gone to Cardiff University at the same time as Neil Kinnock, was part of the youthful "cultural revolution" that had hit Brent Labour politics in the early 1980s, leaving Long and others of the old guard with all the potency of beached whales. As chair of education during the McGoldrick case, Anderson had alienated many ordinary voters but not the constituency activists who did most of the voting for the leadership. To them he still seemed the ideal man. Anderson was cute and sharp-tongued in debate, close to but not of the hard left, and had a well-merited reputation for combativeness when dealing with officials.

Anderson won the vote in the three constituencies by two to one, but when the group met in November it refused to ratify the elections. It was suggested that there had been voting irregularities in the constituency meetings. The group then ran its own contest from which Long, nominated by Merle Amory, emerged as the victor over Anderson by 18 to 17.

Out of the mayhem came a Labour group bitterly split in three directions. Long's faction, reckoned to represent the most conformist wing of the party, managed to hang on to its narrow numerical majority. Anderson kept his own cadre of some 10 councillors which often allied with another group of six hard-left members, known locally as "The Trots". This group was led by Graham Durham, a young firebrand who works in the schools department in Ealing and declares allegiance to "the Benn and Heffer Labour Party".

Although only a small minority, this group exerted a disproportionate influence. As Durham believed that Mrs Thatcher wanted to abolish local government—"leaving just basic welfare and charity"—his response to all Brent's economic crises was wonderfully simple. All the Council had to do was confront the Government with an illegal budget.

Since this difference of view could no longer be resolved within the discipline of the Labour group, it spilled into the committee and council meetings with paralysing effect. Sandra Ernststoff, who served as chair of the finance committee, said: "It was always clear that the majority of the group were for legality. But at every meeting we had the same debate—legal or not legal. Durham's group was undoubtedly a major part of the reason why Brent left everything so late."

The other cause of Brent's policy of dangerous drift was the inordinately high hopes held out for the wizardry of the finance department. For a while it seemed that these hopes might be justified. Odran Steed, by that time a veteran of many a deferred purchase scheme and advance leasing arrangement, gave the Council its "breathing space" early in 1988 by producing two massive rabbits out of the hat—interest rate swap deals worth £17 million to the Council, and a lease-and-leaseback arrangement capable of bringing in £30 million for revenue purposes

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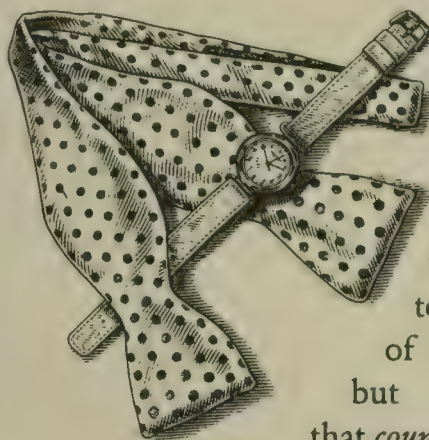
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over two years. The swap deals, which involved the Council in taking a risk on the movement of interest rates in return for a front-end payment, were sharply criticised by the Metropolitan District Auditor, Brian Skinner. He thought they were "arrangements of doubtful legality" for a local authority.

The leaseback scheme involved using 36 council properties, valued at £240 million, as security. The ivy-clad Town Hall was at the top of the list. The complicated deal allowed Brent to raise £30 million promptly and pay back a total of £54 million over a period of seven years.

In March the Government outlawed local authority leaseback deals on the grounds that they were artificial devices to incur capital expenditure in order to borrow above permitted levels.

Brent was still not out of the wood. When this year's budget was in preparation it was discovered that, even with the dicey deals, more money or further cuts were needed to bring the book into balance. After setting a rate of 9.9 per cent—the limit to which the Council felt it could go without incurring the risk of being capped—Long managed to secure a narrow majority for 500 redundancies plus some other savings.

By now, however, Brent's financial structure was so fragile that it needed only a breath of wind to bring it crashing down. All contingency arrangements had been weeded out of the system and the only provision for the future was the liability represented by the creative accountancy deals. From 1989, Brent would be paying more than £10 million on the leaseback deal alone.

With no more rabbits emerging from the hat, Stephen Forster, Brent's director of law and administration, took the only course available to him in the situation and wrote formally to every Councillor. He warned that the money was fast running out and immediate steps were necessary to balance the books. "I have to advise you," he wrote, "that at present you are at risk." Across the board cuts, in the areas of housing, education, welfare, leisure and public works, followed at great speed.

The cuts have been particularly tough on the schools in Brent. This autumn 233 teachers have lost their jobs, with 60 primary school teachers losing their jobs on one day, followed by 94 secondary school teachers on another. Some parents wrote to Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, asking him to take over the running of the Borough's schools.

Labour's chances of achieving a revival before the next election in 1990 cannot be rated very high. While many are prepared to concede that the Labour group was dealt a bad hand, there are no admirers for the way they played it. Confidence had been eroded by the small things as much as the large.

A nine-year-old boy, sent home for thumping his headmistress, was suspended and then reinstated, only to assault her a second time. This sad case gained added prominence because the boy's father was Labour's chair of housing.

Disquiet about the borough's grants system—at one stage Brent Council was giving £8 million a year to some 400 organisations—was not much allayed when Manibhai Patel,

Labour's original deputy leader, was charged with receiving a £4,000 bribe in connection with a council grant. He comes to trial early next year.

Last May it emerged that nine Labour councillors were £12,000 in arrears on their rent or rates. One councillor brazened out the disclosure by saying that it just went to show how "representative" they were. Dorman Long, whose



Cuts in Social Services provoked demonstrations

It emerged that nine Labour councillors were £12,000 in arrears on rents and rates. One councillor said it showed how representative they were

rent arrear was the highest at over more than £3,000, admitted that a bad example had been set. He said there was a problem with his standing order, now rectified.

Allied to Labour's facility for shooting itself in the foot there is inescapable unpopularity brought about by the arbitrary nature of the cuts. The welfare area is replete with bizarre cases.

A disabled lady, mugged and relieved of her purse in Kilburn, found her application for renewal of her stolen bus pass denied for reasons of civic economy. Workers with the mentally ill in Wembley were stunned to have one post "frozen" and one axed. "They were actually funded by the DHSS," said an exasperated administrator. "They were not Brent's to axe."

A project to integrate disabled children into ordinary schools almost came unstuck when term started without welfare assistants to look after them. A number of hospitals reported reluctance to discharge elderly patients because the support system maintained by the council is disappearing in the purge of social workers.

Jim Mullaney, the co-ordinator of Age Concern, said, "I'm worried about the knock-on effect: hospitals being reluctant to admit old people because they can't get them out again. The ramifications don't bear thinking about."

Large-scale demonstrations of the disabled

outside the Town Hall succeeded in restoring £1 million of the money lopped off Brent's 600 voluntary services, but few have survived intact. None can be sure of survival beyond the next budget in March.

The cuts have appeared very arbitrary. This autumn the decision to close Kensal Rise Library, which was opened by the American author Mark Twain in 1900, was marked by a "read-in" of Twain's works which was almost abandoned because somebody raised the question of the racist attitudes of Huckleberry Finn.

More unpopular is the proposal to close public lavatories and to cut spending on street cleaning. Brent is one of the most untidy boroughs in Britain and residents report that they have noticed the same piles of litter stay intact for weeks.

Signs of a new dawn of sweet reason for the Council are hard to detect but the crisis seems to have taken the thrill out of fantasy politics. Such movement as there has been in the Labour group has been towards Long's centrist position. The worrying loss of officials goes on but the calibre of those who remain is impressive. "There's no way I could leave Brent." I was told by one senior officer, "I'd miss the theatre of it all too much." The one exception he made was the Kuba Assegai show.

Even here there were signs of progress after a year that imposed strains on Assegai's credibility. In January he was jailed for six weeks for assaulting an ex-policeman and aggravating the offence by accusing the magistrates of being racists and freemasons. He was up before the courts again a few months later accused of assaulting Michael Stoten, then Brent's Director of Education, and of threatening to kill him. At his committal Assegai claimed he was the innocent victim of "a Jewish and freemason conspiracy". Apparently despairing of British justice, Assegai jumped bail and headed for America, leaving two of his trusting acquaintances to pay the £5,000 surety or go to jail.

With the edge taken off the extremes of the anti-racism policies, the aspects of it which have merit have a chance to flourish. Almost unremarked in the clamour over cuts was the fact that the race specialists in schools scheme achieved Section 11 funding for 60 posts.

They had never been "race spies" or anything like, said Sir David Lane, former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, in his official inquiry into the project. He was sure the scheme could succeed and be a model for others so that "the popular sport of Brent-bashing might be replaced by Brent-emulation".

There is no question that Brent is a borough with a lot to learn but, as Britain comes to terms with its multi-racial heritage, it also has something of importance to teach. Unlike most other London boroughs with a high immigrant concentration, Brent has yet to have a race riot.

Brent may not have achieved an ideal of racial harmony, but the races there are a long way from alienation. A spirit of stropky egalitarianism, once cherished in the democratic tradition, rules. Responding to this spirit can make for a weird and wonderful type of politics but it beats going up in flames ■

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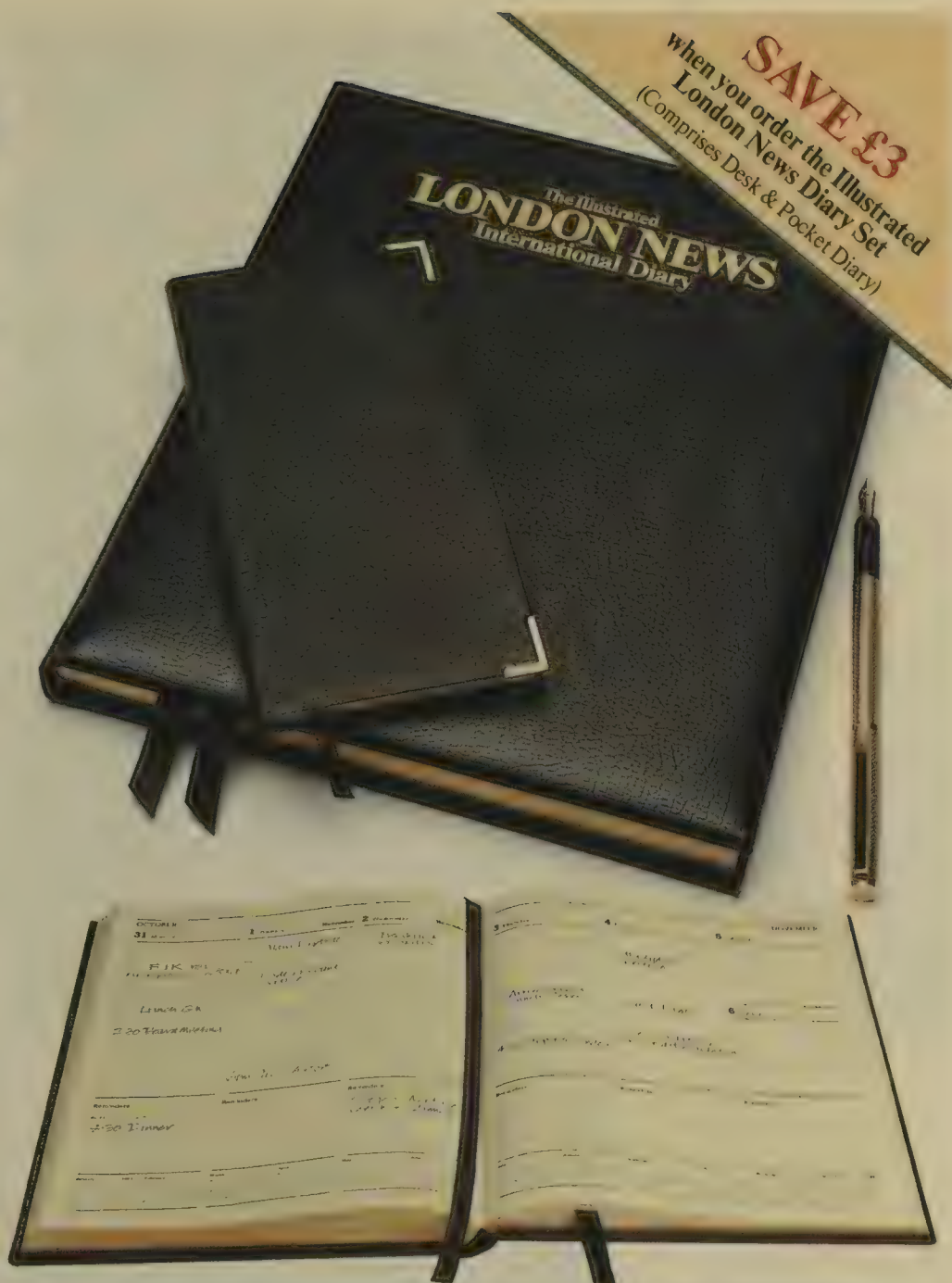
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WINTER DELIGHTS

The pleasures that the capital has to offer during the winter are many and varied. But often they remain neglected or unexplored. Here the ILN's connoisseurs of capital delights provide a list of enthusiasms

Café life

If there is one activity that captures the delight of London in winter it is sitting in one of the old, established cafés that are dotted around town. A fair number in Soho have been discovered by earnest art students dressed in black, but others—German, Polish, French and Hungarian—have served the same customers for decades. They are elegant, restrained places, perfect for reading newspapers or books, for self-indulgence, conversation and quiet flirtation. Try these:

Maison Sagne. 105 Marylebone High Street, W1. Pronounced “sign”, this has all the virtues of a continental coffee house. The bakery and café was founded in 1921 by a Swiss pastry cook. Thirty years ago it was taken over by Stanley Comras and Ray Hall who have maintained the murals and light fittings exactly as they were when Monsieur Sagne opened just after the First World War. The cakes and croissants made by Ray Hall in the bakery below the café are among the best in the capital. Mr Comras is a polite, neat man who gently coaxes his staff through the days, in which there are only one or two slack periods. The many well-known regulars include Eleanor Bron and Sir Clement Freud, who presumably approve of the café’s no-smoking policy.

Maison Bouquillon. 42 Moscow Road, W2. This is a much less conventional establishment than Sagne. The cakes have a Spanish influence and the decoration is less cosy; however, the coffee is wonderful. Well known regulars include Stephen Pile, the humorist, who assembled some of his book *Heroic*



ANTHONY BLAKE

The cold weather brings with it the excuse to drink mulled wine

Failures over Bouquillon’s cakes. **Daquise Restaurant.** 20 Thurloe Street, SW7. Daquise is one of the wonders of London because, despite its long-established presence a few yards from the entrance to South Kensington tube station, it retains an atmosphere which is entirely East European.

This is in part achieved by the restrained Polish characters who frequent Daquise for its Polish cuisine. They sit gravely along the wall either saying little, or suddenly erupting into what sounds like fierce argument. The cakes are no longer baked on the spot, but Daquise is a good place to end days spent at the Victoria and Albert Museum or even shopping in Knightsbridge. The food is basic, excellent and very suitable for winter.

Pâtisserie Parisienne. 24 Phillimore Gardens, W8. The Parisienne is little known beyond its immediate neighbourhood, yet the cakes taste as if they had been made in France—which is no mean achievement. The Pâtisserie is the haunt of slightly dotty old ladies, and makes a good destination after a walk round the shops of Holland Street and Gregory Place.

Jaquet. 75 St John’s Wood High Street, NW8. It is not always easy to get a table at Jaquet, particularly at weekends, but the cakes are wonderful. Many consider Jaquet the best pastry cook in London.

Bar Italia. 22 Frith Street, W1. The Polledri family who run this tiny Soho café are football mad: there is a huge satellite TV screen at the back that picks up Italy’s international matches (if they win, the

cheers can be deafening). As for the coffee, it’s a secret blend of three different types of bean put through a 30-year-old Gaggia machine.

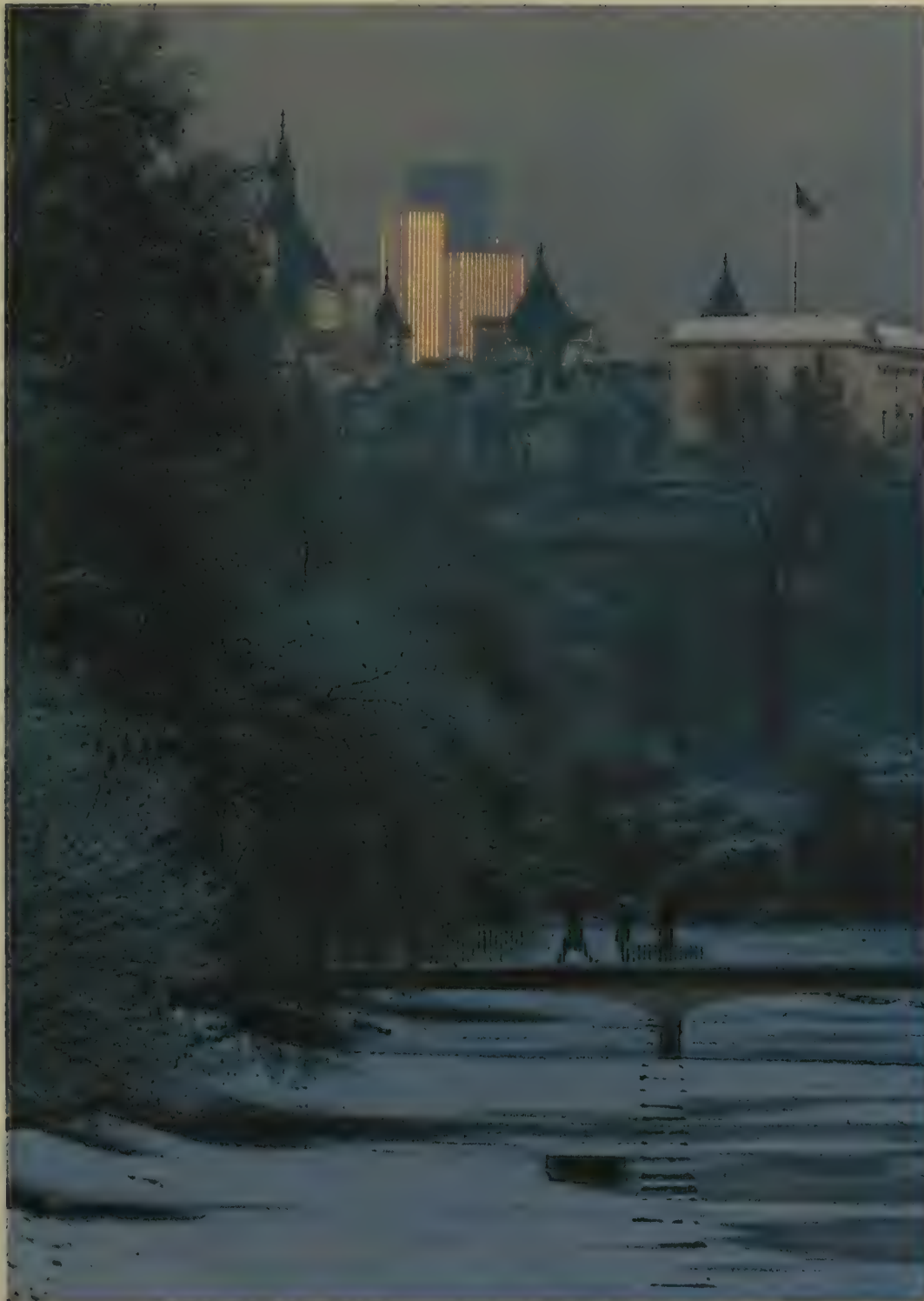
The Troubadour. 265 Old Brompton Road, SW5. Very much a relic from the “Beat” days, with the same old anti-Vietnam posters on the walls. The upstairs café is buzzing and atmospheric, while downstairs folk singers and artists entertain. They still recall the occasion in 1963 when Bob Dylan stepped out of the audience to play a set. A limited menu is available.

Maison Bertaux. 28 Greek Street, W1. The coffee here is French-style, without Italian froth, and there is a tremendous selection of pastries. Lazy Sunday morning croissants and brioches are also superb. The clientele tends to be a mixture of sharp-suited Soho designers and bookish students, with a few actors and showbiz types thrown in.

Monmouth Coffee House. 27 Monmouth Street, WC2. A shop, rather than a café, but with very pleasant “tasting booths” at the rear (complete with newspapers). There are six varieties of bean to choose from: Columbian, Nicaraguan, Kenyan, Costa Rican and Papua New Guinean.

Mulled wine

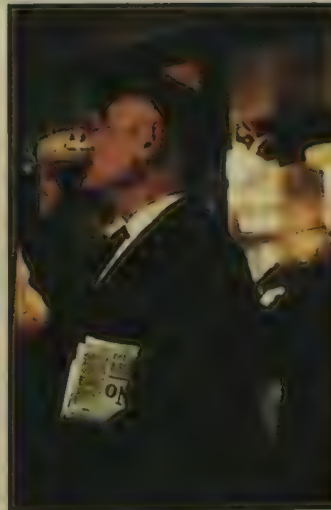
The excuse to drink mulled wine is one of the good things about cold weather. The trouble is that most pubs and wine bars believe that it is enough to warm up a pan of red wine and pour it into a large thermos flask ready for dispensing. It is not. In the hope that publicans and wine bar proprietors are among our readers, we publish here a recipe for mulled wine. However there are some that



Even the National Westminster building looks beautiful in a winter sunset across Hyde Park

PATRICK GORMAN

BRIAN SEED



After tea at the Café de Paris in Leicester Square, a walk in the snow can be followed by a special winter ale

do specialise in good mulled wine. Try any of the following:

Julie's Wine Bar, 135 Portland Road, W11

Jules, Jermyn Street, W1

The Bell and Crown, 72 Strand-on-the-Green, W4

The Dome, 38 Hampstead High Street, NW3

Joe's Wine Bar, Lavender Hill, SW11

The House on Rosslyn Hill, 34 Rosslyn Hill, NW3

Mulled wine recipe

Place peel of one lemon and one orange into a saucepan containing half a pint of water. Add six cloves, one stick of cinnamon, half a nutmeg and 12 lumps of white sugar. Bring to the boil. When the sugar has dissolved, add the wine and a small amount of cognac. Bring back to the boil. Strain into a warmed jug or bowl. Consume.

The real fire

The Clean Air Act extinguished most of the capital's open fires, despite the enormous variety of smokeless fuels on the market. Some of the best open fires in London are in:

The Turk's Head, 10 Motcombe Street, SW1. The Turk's Head was reputedly frequented by Dickens (which pub wasn't?), and before him, by Swift.

The Star Tavern, 6 Belgrave Mews West, SW1. Small unspoilt mews pub with two open fires.

The Tidal Basin Tavern, 31 Tidal Basin Road, Victoria Docks, E16. Originally a dockworkers' pub, it reopened two years ago. Real log fires and hot toddies.

The Travellers' Club, 106 Pall Mall, SW1. Although it is open only to its 1,200 members and their guests, the Travellers' Club has one of the most beautiful interiors in London and is deemed to have one of the best open fires.

The Rosemary Branch, 2 Sheperton Road, N1. Said to have been founded in the 11th century. It enjoys a late licence, one very good open fire, and a view over the Regent's Canal.

The Holly Bush, 22 Holly Mount, NW3. Beautiful interior with real fires and gaslighting.

The White Cross Hotel, Walter Lane, Richmond. A riverside pub established 160 years ago on a site once occupied by a monastery, the name derives from the white cross worn on the monks' habits. The White Cross has a rare marble fireplace situated beneath a window, and the smoke escapes horizontally towards a chimney to the left.

Football

The third round of the FA Cup is, for every football fan, an annual punctuation mark in the interminable winter darkness of the post-Christmas period. This is the moment at which the first-division teams join with the surviving third- and fourth-division teams, and the odd non-League minnow, on the long road to Wembley, the Cup Final, and early summer.

What makes the FA Cup a greater sporting competition than Wimbledon or Open Golf is that it is not seeded; the draw does not flatter the pride of the "superleaguers" by opening a path for them to the later rounds. The third round throws up unlikely and provocative encounters. Liverpool and Manchester United may be drawn together, compelled to summon all their resolution at the first hurdle. Nonetheless, the real thrill is in the possibility of what the sports writers call giant-killing, when the underdog has the chance to defeat the favourite.

Swimming

It is a delight, although a somewhat sadistic one, to watch the hearty fools dive into the Serpentine or Highgate Pond on Christmas morning. The Hyde Park race is over 100 yards and the winner takes home the Peter Pan Cup which was donated by J M Barrie 70 years ago. The Highgate event, starting an hour later at 10am, is less formal.

Opera Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Christina Eira*, which opens at the London Coliseum on December 14, will provide an escape from winter blues into the unfamiliar world of a 19th-century Russian fairytale. Described by the producer, David Pountney, as "opera's answer to *The Nutcracker*", it combines episodes of rural Russian life and colourful folklore with dramatic excursions into the supernatural.

The libretto is based on Gogol's story *The Night Before Christmas*, on which Tchaikovsky had previously and unsuccessfully based an opera. It concerns the village beauty, Oksana, who refuses to marry the blacksmith, Vakula, until he brings her a pair of embroidered boots like those worn by the Tsarina. Vakula's efforts to obtain them involve him in an encounter with the Devil, on whose back he rides through the air to St Petersburg for an audience with the Tsarina.

The transformation of the Devil into a horse, the journey through space, not to mention a witch flying about on a broomstick, gives the

producer and the designer, Sue Blane, plenty of scope for spectacular effects. The opera will be conducted by Albert Rosen, who has been responsible for innumerable memorable performances of little-known Russian and Czech operas at the Wexford Festival.

Ballet

Every winter, the Festival Ballet charms adults and children with its staging of *The Nutcracker*. An old chestnut, but it continues to give entertainment, and David Walker's designs for fantastic costumes, mice and toy soldiers always delight. Children, no matter how street-wise, are thrilled by the Nutcracker Prince, the Sugar Plum Fairy, the Land of Snow, the Lemonade Sea and the Magical Kingdom of Sweets.

This year Peter Schaufuss's production opens on Boxing Day and runs until January 14. The principal dancers will include Patrick Armand, Leanne Benjamin, Matz Skoog and Maximiliano Guerra, an Argentinean making his debut.

Circus

Gerry Cottle and Brian Austen join forces this year to present *The Greatest Show on Earth* at two venues. At Battersea Park from Saturday, December 17 to Sunday, January 8, 1989, performances will run on weekdays at 3pm and 7pm, weekends, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and Bank Holiday Monday at 2pm and 5pm. The Big Top at Wembley will hold its first performance at 7pm on Christmas Eve, and subsequent shows on weekdays start at 3pm and 7pm (no performance on January 9/10), weekends, New Year's Day and Bank Holiday Monday, January 2, at 2pm and 5pm. Last performance on January 15.

Ticket prices for both circuses are: adults £6, £8, £10, children and OAPs half price. Book tickets at Battersea Park (Chelsea Bridge Gate 10am to 8pm), Wembley Arena Box Office (10am to 9pm, Sundays until 6pm), Tower Records at Piccadilly Circus, or Dial-A-Seat 924 1111 for Battersea Park, 925 1234 for Wembley.

Exhibitions

Enjoying museums requires intelligence and discrimination. An exhibition should never be a test of endurance. While the great exhibitions clearly have their merits—Hockney at the Tate Gallery, Leonardo da Vinci at the Hayward,

Toulouse-Lautrec and Henry Moore at the Royal Academy—there is another more selective

enjoyment to be had from museums, and that is the short sharp visit ending with sustenance.

Instead of going to the Hockney exhibition, spend half an hour looking at the early English portraits on permanent display at the Tate and then have lunch in the gallery's excellent restaurant. Similarly, it is a great mistake to traipse through the art of ages at the National Gallery. By the 17th century fatigue sets in. Instead, choose a room or two (we suggest the Flemish and Dutch landscapes) and limit yourself to those. Then go and have lunch or coffee. This method always works for the permanent exhibitions in London, particularly the Victoria & Albert and the British Museum, both of which have improved their restaurants and cafés.

The perfect winter museum is the Wallace Collection in Manchester Square. It has the atmosphere of a private house, which it once was, and the merits of representing a single family's taste. The collection of furniture, armour, pictures and china is unpredictable and undaunting. It is well combined with a visit to Maison Sagne in Marylebone High Street (see Café life).

THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sir Arthur CONAN DOYLE



Curly up with a detective story

Warming restaurants

There is nothing quite so depressing in winter as a restaurant specialising in nouvelle cuisine. Although the fashion for thinly sliced, undercooked meals on octagonal white plates is said to be passing, there are still many restaurants in London which operate the minimalist principle. The atmosphere in such restaurants often tends to be as Spartan as the portions.

But here is a short list of those which serve fortifying and original meals and which also have a warm atmosphere.

HEATHER ANGEL



Hitchcock must have planned *The Birds*



Or brave the elements for the pleasure of

Nikita's Russian Restaurant, 63 Ifield Rd, SW10. There is only one thing that has to be watched in the old Russian restaurant Nikita's, and that is the consumption of the 16 different types of vodka. All of them have a sly but devastating



when the starlings swoop in great flocks



giant-killing

effect. They are served in flasks that are encased in blocks of ice. The vodka (lemon and red pepper pepperzovka are the best) slips down easily and heats the body from the inside. More than three glasses however, and the diner risks a fog descending

SPENCER GRANT



Colour and fun at the circus

Simpson's, 100 The Strand, WC2. The food is not perhaps up to the standard of the first four entries because Simpson's makes a virtue of its Englishness. Aside from being unable to cook, the English are incompetent when it comes to waiting at table. But, despite the drawbacks, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding are good. So, too, is the treacle pudding, which has remained on the menu for at least 10 years. Simpson's is a wonderful place to watch the English in one of their natural habitats.

The Gay Hussar, 2 Greek Street, W1. This establishment has all the virtues of a winter restaurant. The food is delicious, original and filling. The atmosphere is cosy (a rich, red wine-coloured decoration) and the service, despite the recent departure of the old charmer Victor Sassie, is good. Traditionally, the Gay Hussar is the lunchtime haunt of politicians, publishers, journal-

ists and the odd spy. In the evening the chattering classes are less conspicuous. The menu, as one guide points out, is not for the faint hearted: roast goose, pressed beef, head, hare, pike, red cabbage, veal and dumplings... wonderful.

Sweetings, 39 Queen Victoria Street, EC4. Sweetings has been serving traditional English fish dishes since 1906 and appears to have changed very little over the years. Handsome, mahogany-topped oyster bars and a mosaic floor create an appealingly faded air. Open only at lunchtime, it is always crowded. Energetic waiters in white jackets weave in and out among grey-suited City gents, and the crush of bodies is likely to warm you up even before you reach your table. The food is simple and hearty: generous slabs of fried plaice and haddock, succulent salmon fish cakes and real English chips. There are roasted savouries to follow, and reassuring puddings: jam roll, spotted dick and a steamed syrup affair which is served in a moat of custard.

The George and Vulture, 5 Castle Court, EC4. Another City stronghold catering for those with fond, if somewhat rose, memories of school dinners. Tucked behind Cornhill and reached by a series of narrow alleyways, its setting is Dickensian, its plain facade is easy to overlook but it is worth searching out. Inside, diners sit on old-fashioned wooden settles, and there is a deliciously welcoming atmosphere, created largely by the open charcoal grill.

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Books Certain books acquire a particular savour when read during the winter months, especially by the fireside as dusk falls, "vel upon veil". They are in essence British, they feature old-fashioned prose, and they offer what used to be called "rattling good yarns". The events they describe are often alarming but reassuringly remote. In their

different ways, the cranky, scholastic ghost stories of M.R. James and the country house mysteries of Agatha Christie admirably fit the bill.

Accounts of savage, inclement weather produce a comforting warmth in the reader. "It was a wild, tempestuous night towards the close of November," began Dr Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle's story *The Golden Pines-Neg*. "Outside the wind howled down Baker Street, while the rain beat fiercely against the windows. It was strange there in the very depths of the town, with its miles of man's handiwork on every side of us, to feel the iron grip of Nature, and to be conscious that to the huge, elemental forces all London was no more than the molehills that dot the fields."

Splendid, shivery stuff! It takes Charles Dickens to improve upon it. "Fog everywhere," wrote Dickens, building up his picture of "impossible November" in the peerless opening chapter of *Black House*. "Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck."

Dickens's London, in all its varying moods, has a richness and excitement that somehow eludes chroniclers of its modern, affluent counterpart. Where is the contemporary novel of Docklands and similar developments, which can compare with *Dombey & Son*'s scenes of Victorian industrialisation on the march? "Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped up by great beams of wood..."

Time, of course, lends enchantment, but the shadowy London of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, a tale of spies and revolutionaries, has a vivid quality unmatched 60 years later by Le Carré's George Smiley novels.

Birds of Winter

There are two members of the London bird population that need to be avoided; the pigeon and the Canada goose. They are respectively the down-and-out and the mugger of the bird world. But the winter does bring some wonderful sights to the capital, the most common being the great flocks of

up to half a *million* starlings that commute in the late afternoon to the warmest parts of the city. They gather in enormous clouds outside London and in the parks, and then, as if ruled by a single will, they take off for the plane trees and building ledges of the West End where they add an oddly sinister quality to the streets in the early evening.

John Julius Norwich's Christmas Cracker

This tiny commonplace book has little to do with Christmas, although originally Lord Norwich used to send it to his friends as a Christmas card. Nineteen years ago he had the idea of assembling the literary scraps—quotations, epigrams, weird translations, love letters—that he had been collecting all his life. They represent an extraordinarily wide reading as well as taste which is peculiar to Lord Norwich. Some 3,500 copies of the 1989 Christmas Cracker go on sale for £3 in central London book shops from the middle of November.

Breakfast

In his Book of Ballads, A.P. Herbert wrote: "Bring porridge, bring sausage, bring fish for a start, bring kidneys and mushrooms and partridges' legs, but let the foundation be bacon and eggs."

Herbert's hymn to the English breakfast got it perfectly right. Lunch may produce sleepy afternoons and dinner sleepless nights, but the English winter breakfast, big with carbohydrates, gives the body a kick-start and keeps its motor running.

Its true enjoyment involves certain rules, nonetheless. It should never sink to the level of a "power breakfast", an insidious American invention that promotes business above pleasure. Nor should it be confused either with the arteriosclerotic "greasy spoon" repeat or with the feeble "continental" version (juice, croissants, tea or coffee), whose consequence is truly the unbearable lightness of being hungry.

No, the requirements of the proper English breakfast are for porridge, devilled kidneys, Finnan haddock, kedgeree, fried bread, black pudding and saute potatoes—with, of course, bacon and eggs. This is the breakfast of champions, to quote another literary (if American) source.

If this menu seems to fit the description "blow-out", so be it. At the Fox and Anchor in Smithfield and Harry's in the West End, two very dissimilar establishments, a



Chestnuts smell delicious

lish à la carte for £9.95, as well as a "Knightsbridge" breakfast (£16) which includes smoked salmon, scrambled eggs and champagne. (Open 7-10.30am, Monday to Saturday; 8-11am, Sunday).

The River Restaurant, Savoy Hotel, The Strand, WC2. In the same class as the Park Room, the à la carte costs £11.50. Perhaps surprisingly there is no need to book, but there is an obligation to dress up a little. This is not an imposition, though, for the charming view of the Thames and the Embankment is worth the effort—as indeed is the food.

Horseshoeing
Though contact with the red-nosed avarice of London's bookmaking fraternity is not usually contemplated with delight, there is much to be said for winter sheepchase meetings. They are generally less crowded than flat season fixtures and the wonderful spectacle of racehorses at full stretch, can be spectacular indeed from the vantage

BILL COWARD



Marble Arch fountain: You don't have to trek out of town for scenic views
ART DIRECTIONS



There are excellent tobogganing slopes throughout the capital
DILL GREEN



When the writing is on the wall... or bench... retreat to a hot house

point of the two or three jumps before the winning post. There is also the fascinating antics of the human race to be admired.

There are seven good racecourses within an hour of London by train (easily the best form of transport): Ascot, Kempton, Newbury, Sandown Park, Kempton Park, Windsor and Lingfield. Kempton Park and Newbury are best, because the stands have not been modernised to look like airport terminals. It has to be said, however, that the facilities at Sandown and Ascot are impressive and the quality of racing is usually good.

The best meetings are: Lingfield: December 10. (Lingfield Park Handicap Chase). Ascot: December 10. (SGB Handicap Chase). Kempton: December 26 (King George VI Chase). Newbury: December 30, 31. Windsor: January 2. Sandown: January 7. Ascot: January 13/14. Kempton Park: January 21.

Winter warmers

Winter ales (or "old ales", as they are sometimes known) are special beers brewed and sold for only a limited period of the year, usually between November and the end of

February. Brewed in early summer, they mature in wooden casks, from which they are often served direct. Characteristically, they have a high specific gravity, a dark complexion, and a treasely consistency. In other words, they are extra strong. Each brew has its devotees, and regulars will fondly recall vintage years. Try a pint at the following recommended London pubs:

The Bricklayer's Arms. 63 Charlotte Rd, EC4 (739 3443). This year this pub boasts two winter ales: "Winter Royal" from the Whitbread brewery in London, and "King & Barnes Old Ale" from Sussex.

The Lamb. 94 Lamb's Conduit St, WC1 (405 0713). "Young's Winter Warmer" is this year's special—"a nutty, sweet beer" the landlord tells us "and very popular". (It is likely to run until the end of February.)

The Nag's Head. 79-81 Heath St, NW3 (435 4108). Populated by beer fanatics (it used to be run by the Campaign for Real Ale), this free-house is serving McCullen's "Christmas Ale" this winter.

The Sun Inn. 63 Lamb's Conduit St, WC1 (405 8278). Two winter ales on offer: "Tolly Old Strong" from Ipswich, and "Adam's Broadside" from Suffolk. **The Windsor Castle.** The Walk, Church Lane, N2 (888 3765). Fifteen real ales on tap, and featuring McCullen's as its main winter variety.

Jermyn Street, SW1.

Completed in the early 1680s, Jermyn Street has for a long time been associated with small specialist shops, although originally it was known as a street of good little hotels and private houses. Thackeray, Gladstone, Newton and Sydney Smith all lived in the street.

Walking from east to west you pass restaurants, pipe makers, antique shops specialising in classical artifacts, a Christopher Wren Church, chess shop, shirt and tie makers, and perfumers. The shirt-makers occupy a number of sites in the middle part of the street (Harvey & Hudson, New & Lingwood, Hilditch & Key) and some have shop fronts that date from the 1850s.

To pass along Jermyn Street is also to encounter a number of delicious smells. The wonderful smell of cheeses that emanates from Paxton & Whitfield is followed by the scents from Floris, the ground coffee from the tea rooms at the rear of Fortnum & Mason, and fresh tobacco from Astleys. The street is

good too for restaurants (Rowleys and L'Écu de France bars (Jules) and tea (Fortnum & Mason).

Hats

Hats deserve an entry in this list of enthusiasms if only to encourage more people to wear them. It may be that Londoners have an inherent shyness about wearing hats, although when you consider the frequent appearance of the brimless, upright affairs favoured by civil servants this cannot be the case. Young people appear to be leading the revival of the hat, with an astonishing array of styles which help to make the streets more interesting. One advantage of the hat is that it can lend a comic air to the humours.

Winter recitals

Fine music is not just the preserve of the Barbican and the Festival Hall. Recitals have traditionally been an excellent way of hearing a wide range of church and secular music in the most extraordinary of architectural surroundings. Lunchtime concerts in churches especially provide a haven from the busy world of commerce and from winter shopping.

Here are a few of the best for this winter.

St James's. Piccadilly, W1 (734 4111).

Henry Sturt (violin) and Francis Markes (piano): selection from Mozart & Debussy. Dec 2. 1.10pm. Treasury Singers: Christmas Programme. Dec 9. 1.10pm.

Ann Hooley (piano) and Jane Dodd (piano): including works by Schubert. Dec 16. 1.10pm.

St Martin in the Fields. Trafalgar Sq, WC2 (839 1930).

Monica Guttman, piano: Chopin Nocturnes Op 9 numbers 1-5; Liszt Harmonies du Soir. Dec 12. 1.10pm.

Tamara Piano Trio: Haydn Trio in D major; Beethoven Archduke Trio. Dec 13. 6.00pm.

London Orpheus Choir: Carols for choir and audience with readings by Susan Hampshire and music from the Mandeville Brass Ensemble. Dec 16. 7.30pm. £3, £3 concessions (bookable in advance from Andrea Whittaker, 9, Stanhope Ave, N3).

St Paul's Cathedral. St Paul's, EC4 (248 2705).

Cathedral Choir: Handel's Messiah. Dec 6. 6pm.

Southwark Cathedral. Borough High St, SE1 (407 3708).

Chandos Chamber Choir. St Nicholas Mass: C.P.E. Bach's Magnificat. Dec 4. 8pm. £4-£6.

Trinity College of Music: Choral Concert. Dec 7. 7.30pm.

Collegiate Singers: Carol Festival. Dec 11. 7.30pm.

Cold weather walks

Cold weather walks need imagination. Areas that seem run-down and melancholy in the summer are often transformed into a majestic bleakness during the winter. For instance, the old scrap-yards along the Thames, especially in the undeveloped Docklands, become quite beautiful with a thin covering of snow or early morning frost. The same is true of the Victorian cemeteries at Highgate, Brompton and Kensal Green. They all were built to relieve the overcrowded burial grounds of the city, and all of them contain splendid examples of 19th-century memorial art. More conventionally picturesque walks may be found at Hampton Court (all of which is now open on Sundays during the winter), by the River Thames near Ham House and in Richmond Park.

Tobogganing

The best places in London are Brockwell Park, Streatham Common and Parliament Hill. A good speed can be achieved on the latter. In the past it has claimed breakages, among them the ankle of Mrs Shirley Williams.

Leadenhall

Leadenhall Market is a pleasure in winter. Originally "foreigners", that is to say anyone from outside London, were allowed to sell their poultry, butter and cheese there. Today a good many butchers and poultry merchants occupy the great glass edifice built 107 years ago by Horace Jones. In the winter there are remarkable displays of game and fish in the market which now also houses a number of good wine bars, restaurants and tipples bars. A visit to Leadenhall should be combined with a visit to Richard Rogers's Lloyd's building which towers above the east end of the market.

Chestnuts

The chestnut salesman is perhaps the one delight that everyone associates with London in the winter. He materialises outside the parks and in the West End, wearing a heavy overcoat and fingerless gloves, in late October and continues to sell their envelopes of chestnuts until the early spring, illuminated by the glow of his portable coke stove. However, pleasure derives from the sight of the chestnut man rather than his wares, which are invariably burnt or bad ■

THE QUIET RAIDER OF WALL STREET

JEFFREY FERRY

Joe Flom is a modest-looking lawyer, but his reputation as a corporate raider makes companies pay retainers to stop him working for the other side. Why is the stealthy Mr Flom setting up shop in the City?

Joe Flom is the most feared takeover adviser in the United States. He is the senior partner at New York's biggest law firm, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom, and the only "name partner" still alive. Flom earns between \$3 million and \$5 million a year, which may make him the highest-paid lawyer in America. Next year, when New York City stages a gala celebration to mark the bicentennial of George Washington's inauguration, there will be four official co-chairmen: Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon... and Joe Flom. Not bad for a guy who did not graduate from college.

Flom was in London last month for the formal opening of his firm's London office. Surprisingly thoughtful and soft-spoken for a corporate raider, 64-year-old Flom plays down the suggestion that Skadden, Arps' arrival in Britain presages a move towards more aggressive takeover battles in the UK and Europe. But Skadden, Arps' arrival is only the latest of many signs showing that American corporate raiders now see takeover possibilities in Britain and European stock markets as more rewarding than those on the well-ploughed furrows of the American exchanges.

Joe Flom's rise to fame is emblematic of the changes that have revolutionised American investment banking and transformed the American corporate scene in the past 25 years. Raised in Brooklyn, New York, Flom went to City College, but his education was interrupted by the war. On demobilisation, he persuaded Harvard Law School to admit him without a college degree and he graduated in 1948. He was hired as the first associate (non-partner) of the then eponymous four-man firm of Skadden Arps, Slate and Meagher. In the early 1950s Flom took the firm into the uncharted waters of hostile takeovers—i.e. takeovers of companies whose managements did not wish to be taken over.

In the 1950s and 1960s American investment

banking was a cosy, clubby world. Gentlemen bankers, their lawyers, and leading corporate executives did as much business on the golf course or in the club as they did in the office. The very limited competition which existed was conducted according to strict ground rules, and hostile takeovers were strictly off-limits.

For 20 years Flom toiled away building up Skadden, Arps' takeover business, outside the financial mainstream. Most of the firm's work came from referrals from other law firms who had refused their clients' requests to represent them on unfriendly bids. "The attitude was, that was something 'nice' people just didn't do," Flom recalls.

In 1973 Morgan Stanley, perhaps the most élite of all the Wall Street houses, concluded that the hostile takeover was irresistible, and got in on the act as adviser on a hostile bid by International Nickel of Canada. The other Wall Street

houses clambered aboard, and the modern takeover boom began.

In the 1980s takeover battles became increasingly audacious, employing ever more imaginative techniques, pushing forward the limits of American company law. The lawyer's role became crucial. Flom won a reputation as a master strategist, inventor of some of the more colourful takeover manoeuvres, and architect of famous victories such as Ronald Perelman's bitter battle for Revlon. It is no exaggeration to say that Skadden, Arps have been involved, on one side or the other, in virtually every major takeover of the past 10 years. Flom has represented every well-known raider in the States, men such as Carl Icahn, T. Boone Pickens, Ronald Perelman and Sir James Goldsmith. He has sat on the opposite side of the table from most of them as well.

A legend has grown up around Flom's rivalry with another New York lawyer, Marty Lipton of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz. Although he has been known to represent the occasional predator, Lipton styles himself as the great defender, advising corporate management on how to fight off hostile bids. Perhaps the most celebrated head-on clash between the two men was over Lord Hanson's 1985 struggle to take over SCM, the Smith-Corona conglomerate. The contest involved countless late-night and all-day strategy sessions as each side huddled with advisers to find a way to outwit the other.

SCM resorted first to a so-called "white knight" defence, enlisting a friendly company, in this case Merrill Lynch, to take over SCM instead of the hostile Lord Hanson, who wanted to break up and sell off most of SCM's subsidiaries. When Hanson upped his price and knocked out Merrill Lynch, SCM's next manoeuvre was the "crown jewel" defence: it promised to sell two of its most valuable subsidiaries to Merrill Lynch at knockdown prices. Hanson, too, went

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in for his share of colourful tactics, at one time suspending his takeover bid in order surreptitiously to buy up SCM shares on the open market, a tactic known as a "street sweep". Twice the battle went into litigation. Both times Flom lost in the lower courts but won on appeal.

Nancy Lieberman, a young partner at Skadden, Arps, describes it as one of the most exciting episodes in her seven years at the firm. Throughout the battle, she says, Joe Flom seemed "five steps ahead of everybody else. He can take the most difficult, confusing, complex situation, present it in a way that makes it seem simple and then explain his solution in a way that makes it seem to be not only the best, but the natural, obvious solution to the problem."

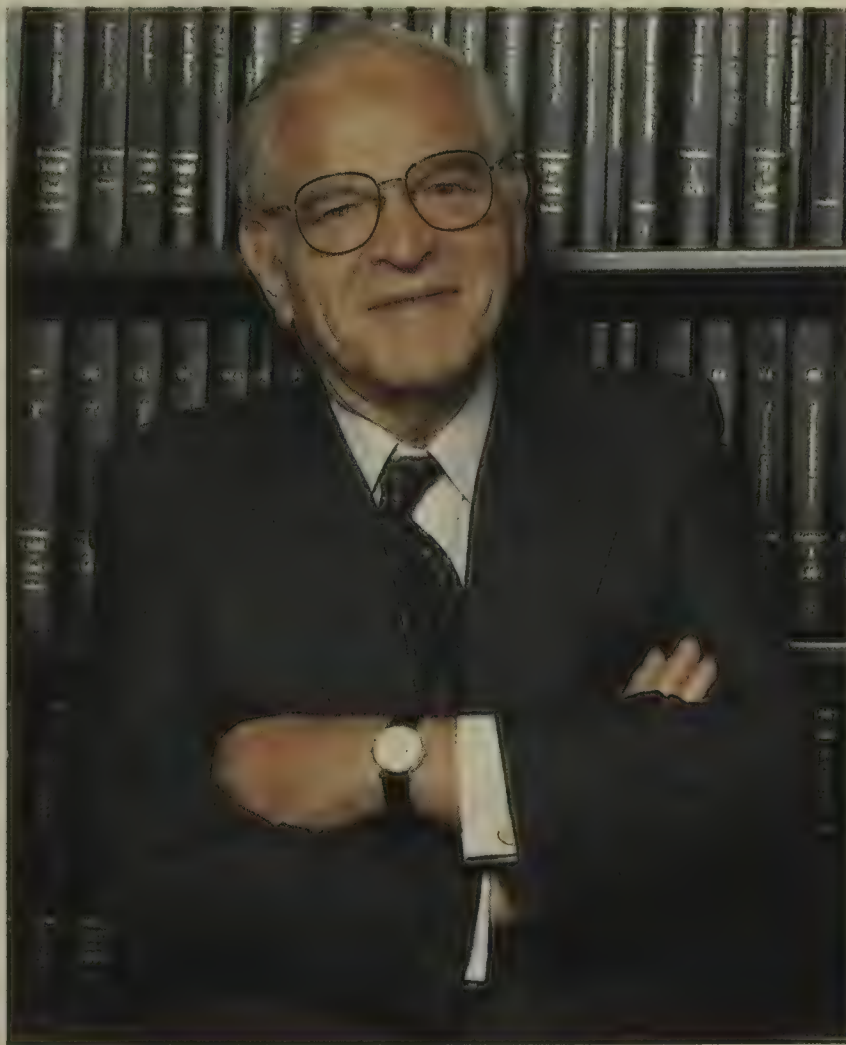
Today, Skadden, Arps is the largest law firm in New York, with 900 lawyers. Each of its 178 partners is estimated to earn something in excess of \$500,000 (£295,000) a year. Twenty-five-year-old law school graduates start on a salary of some \$71,000 (£42,000) a year. Astonishing as this sounds to English ears, the figures are not exceptional for top New York law firms. What distinguishes Skadden, Arps, say its employees, is its emphasis on meritocracy and its refusal to have any truck with the snobberies that still infect the more traditional Wall Street firms. Skadden, Arps recruits from some 30 law schools, instead of from just the handful of top law schools. It has more women lawyers—a total of some 200—than any other firm in America. "This is the fairest, most egalitarian firm in New York," says Lieberman.

A small, square-shouldered man with grey hair and a genial smile, Joe Flom at breakfast in the subdued luxury of the Berkeley Hotel in Knightsbridge looks more like an American grandfather on holiday than a corporate predator. The consummate backroom strategist behind the headline-grabbing raiders, he delivers concise, thoughtful replies in a soft, gravelly New York accent. In recent years he has devoted a large part of his time to philanthropic activities and he talks more passionately about these than anything else. Two years ago Flom "adopted" a class of 80 children from East Harlem, one of New York's poorest neighbourhoods. Flom pledged to pay the full costs of education for every one of the 80 children who goes on to college. In addition,

Flom also pays the costs of a full-time social worker for the children.

Now aged 14, the children come downtown to Flom's office for weekly "rap sessions". So far the scheme is a great success. None of the 80 children has dropped out of school, a creditable achievement for kids growing up in an environment where there are few positive parental role models and where drugs or crime are the most viable routes to financial reward. "It's one thing to throw money at a problem," comments Flom. "It's another to be directly involved and actually see the results."

Flom's enthusiasm for his class has infected the staff at Skadden, Arps. Several lawyers give voluntary one-to-one tutorials to the children.



DAVE HOGAN

Flom sponsors a book club for them and a travel club, sending them recently on an Outward Bound trip to the New Hampshire mountains. "The group is becoming cohesive and the kids are reinforcing each other—that's the most important thing," he says.

Flom rejects accusations that investment bankers are motivated solely by greed. "Knowing most of these guys, I find them more socially conscious than the average, very well-motivated and often very active politically." He is a keen defender of Michael Milken, the architect of investment bank Drexel, Burnham's billion-dollar junk-bond empire. Milken has recently been accused by the US government of insider dealing, stock-price manipulation and other

securities law violations on no fewer than 16 separate takeovers. A trial is expected to start soon. "It's one thing to make charges and another thing to prove them," Flom comments.

Flom defends the ruthless restructuring that corporate raiders have inflicted on America's corporate scene. He acted for Carl Icahn on the takeover of Trans-World Airlines, a case which was one of the inspirations behind the film *Wall Street*. On another case, he acted for a company which cut 27,000 jobs from its payroll to escape a hostile takeover. He defends that decision as in the "best interests of the stockholders".

In America today, companies which have never been taken over or even approached spend hours of management time devising defences to

ward off possible predators. It is widely thought that some companies paying an annual retainer to Skadden, Arps do so purely out of a hope that having Joe Flom on their side might scare off potential predators. As far as Flom is concerned, it is entirely right that jobs, traditions and the freedom of management to pursue its own objectives be sacrificed to the rigours of the corporate raiders' quest for profit. "This is capitalism," says Flom. "I thought profit was what it was supposed to be about."

Flom foresees more of this type of takeover activity coming to Britain. He expects the 1992 unification of European financial markets to dilute the power of the small groups of banks and investors in each European country whose current influence is sufficient to short-circuit many hostile takeovers before they get started. "In the US, the distinction between

hostile and friendly bids is much greater than it is here," he says. "I think you'll find that distinction will widen in Europe too."

Though Flom has been a lifelong Democrat, he had misgivings over Michael Dukakis's sympathy towards protectionism. In another deviation from the standard ultra-conservative political litany of Wall Street, Flom admitted a deep concern for environmental issues. He cited acid rain and the deterioration of the ozone layer: "Issues absolutely fundamental to the health of my grandchildren".

"After all," remarked this unconventional lawyer, smiling philosophically, "if there's no air to breathe, then all this crap about takeovers will be meaningless." ■



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Thyme in Provence

Spring isn't so very far away and Provence in May is a luscious idyll of herbs, truffles and gypsies

ELISABETH LUARD

The vehicle in front of ours in the queue for the Boulogne-Avignon car-train had four surfboards strapped to the roof-rack and 12 boxes of Frosties bricking out the rear window. The surfers were heading, they told me, for a couple of weeks of sunshine at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer on the beaches of the Camargue at the western edge of Provence. My destination was the backwoods—you could call it provincial Provence.

Most of us on the comfortable train were British, including my party of three. The rest were Belgian. Hercule Poirot's countrymen were without Frosties, but they did have picnic baskets. They knew something the British did not: the train has no buffet car. Happily we discovered this in time to make a quick foray into Boulogne to Philippe Olivier's cheese shop for a ripe, runny camembert marinated in *marc*. Back on board with the cheese, a fresh *baguette*, a bag of peaches and a few bottles of wine, we floated on our couchettes through the night.

Next morning we disembarked at Avignon and drove in the early sun past the stony golden vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape towards our destination, Villes-sur-Auzon. The little farming village is tucked into the foothills of Mont Ventoux, the highest peak in Provence. For the fourth time I had used the services of that excellent organization VFB, which manages houses and apartments for self-catering holidays all over rural France, and on this occasion our home for the week was an apartment annexe in a working farm.

Our hosts, the Traverse family—grandfather, grandmother, father, mother and young daughters—were all out in the courtyard in the sun, sorting and grading the morning's asparagus crop. My husband Nicholas repaired to the village bar for a *dom-jérôme* (beer from the barrel) and a copy of *L'Espère*, France's sporting newspaper. Children were playing around the village's five stone fountains, the



Simple beauty abounds outside Vaison-la-Romaine

LANDSCAPE ONLY

atmosphere was jovial. It was Saturday and there was to be a game or two of boules in the square that evening. Bets were placed as the local champion, an old man long past retirement, prepared to defend his title.

Boules apart, the main sporting activity of the area takes place on the roads which climb over and around Mont Ventoux, the windy mountain down whose ravines the *mistral* swirls. Even the local wines

“In Les Saintes-Maries a straggled old woman pressed a tiny freckled cowrie shell into my hand. “To ward off the evil eye, lady,” she whispered, fixing me with her own

are named after cycling and motor-racing heroes—the Cuvée entitled Eric Caritoux shares the wine co-operative's shelves with Maurice Trintignant's recommended tippie. Nowhere else could driving and drinking co-exist so happily.

Admiration of Madame Traverse's fine asparagus produced further information on the specialities of the windy mountain. For the most fragrant herbs, she says, you must go up the gorges of the river Nesque, through Saulx, where you can buy lavender and honey, and round to Buis-les-Baronnies.

Under the 14th-century arches all the scents of Provence are on sale—rosemary and basil, sage and oregano, thyme and marjoram, apricots and scented infusions. For the best olives and the sweetest olive oil, there is nowhere to beat Nyons. The groves which surround the Roman-built town have been harvested for 2,000 years. The oil from their olives, gathered in the winter and pressed without heat or chemical rectification, now has an *appellation contrôlée* like wine.

“There are truffles in Provence in the right season,” Madame

Traverse remarks. “But you need a dog to find them under the green oaks. We used to roll the black truffles in bread dough and roast them in the embers of the fire.” Mme Traverse is full of information. “Beware of unscrupulous dealers,” she warns. “They dye the white-fleshed summer truffles black to fool you, and you will know nothing until you cut into your expensive purchase.”

The upland meadows in May were brilliant with ragged-robin, tassel hyacinths and swallow-tail butterflies. Blue iris and pink cistus fringe the narrow roads, and

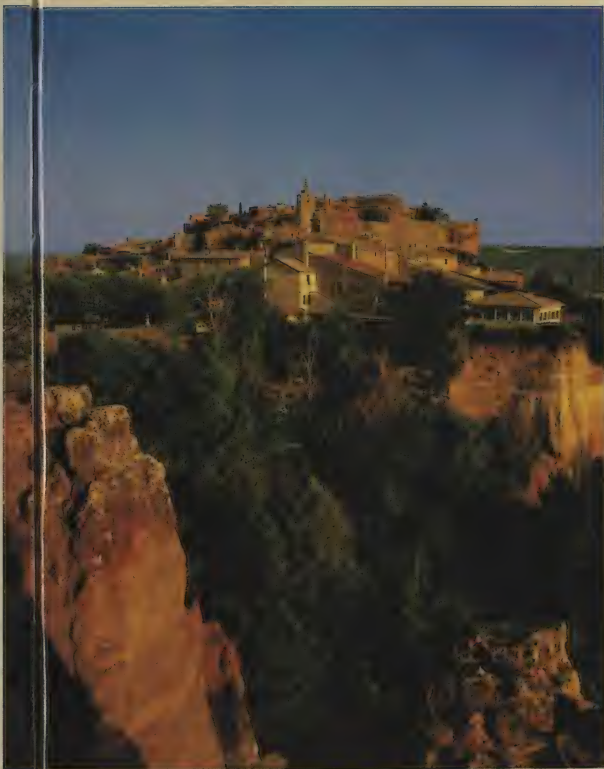


LANDSCAPE ONLY



ROBERT HARDING

turquoise-winged jays flash through the young scrub oak. “If you like flowers,” says Madame Traverse, “come in the early spring, when the fruit trees are in blossom, and you will find wild yellow tulips growing in the furrows between the cherry trees.” Spring in Provence is much earlier than in the rest of France: February or March.



The pleasures of Provence include sampling village life

LANDSCAPE ONLY

Almost any little restaurant in this region can produce a good meal. Local patronage is the main factor in that, and not a dependence on tourism. My favourite restaurant for lunch is in a farmhouse set in its own vineyard at Puymeras, 5 kms north of Vaison-la-Romaine. In season the farmer's wife and mother serve mountains of asparagus dressed with their own thick, yellow olive oil, and a wonderful slow-cooked *dauze* made with their own wine. A fairly average price for lunch of this kind is about 45f, or £3. Dinner naturally costs more, and you should remember that the

provincial French get their noses down early—between 12 and 12.30 at lunchtime, 7 to 7.30pm for dinner.

Self-catering holidays allow you to eat when and where you please, and one option is the *traiteur* if you don't feel like cooking. The *traiteurs* produce seasonal dishes which are bought by all the residents, who get very paritarian about which *traiteur* they patronise. This is therefore an excellent way of sampling regional cuisines. Our choices included such treats as celeriac salad, stuffed snails, cassoulet, and acacia blossom fritters.

The best entertainment of all is to be had on market days. Small communities such as Villes-sur-Auzon can support just a few stalls in the village square, but the bigger market towns turn their streets into one great carnival. Carpentras is pure street-theatre every Friday: the alley-ways overflow with pots and pans and pizza vans, and farmwives with squawking chickens and flop-eared rabbits.

Apt, famous for its crystallised fruit, holds its weekly jamboree on Saturdays: everything from leather sandals to live ducklings, handmade goat's cheese to tubs of olives

pickled with lemons, fennel, chilies. Vaison-la-Romaine becomes one great market-stall on Tuesdays, selling thyme-flower honey, triple-strength lavender oil and gypsy-bright cotton printed with traditional Provençal patterns. My husband found a man selling tiny pottery whistles which could be made to sing like a nightingale, although the local nightingales were not fooled that evening.

On our last day we dropped down to the plain to the ancient Roman capital of Arles for a visit to the Musée d'Arles, the poet Mistral's intimate museum of Provençal life. The tranquil high-ceilinged rooms are crammed with domestic treasure. There are rich velvet ribbons painted like jewelled necklaces; lace *fichus* fine as a spider's web; painted *santons*—craftsman-made nativity figurines and prim paintings of the young brides of Arles, by repute the prettiest girls in France.

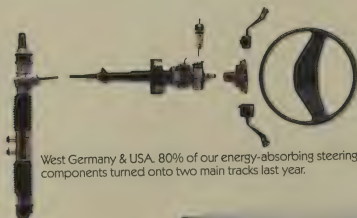
The group voted to take a final run down into the Camargue for a glimpse of the Mediterranean. The road to the sea took us to Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer—the little town which had been the destination of our surfing companions of the train.

There is one gypsy for every 10 tourists in Les Saintes-Maries and when we got there a straggled old woman pressed a tiny freckled cowrie shell into my hand. “To ward off the evil eye, lady,” she whispered, fixing me with her own. Provençal legend claims that the two Holy Marys for whom the port is named—Mary the Mother of James and Mary Magdalene—fled the Holy Land and sailed across the Mediterranean in an open boat to land here.

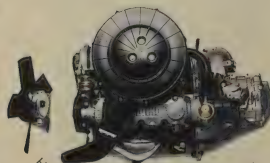
No one about to make a sea voyage would deny a gypsy her dues in Les Saint-Maries. Mindful of the impending cross-Channel return trip, I handed over a 10-franc piece to Gypsy Sara's acolyte. Those first saintly tourists, the natives will tell you, stole away to take refuge among the lavender and wild thyme of the hills of Haute Provence. I can think of no better bolt hole.

Vacances Franco-Britanniques offer a large range of cottage and sublet holiday homes throughout France. They are priced for four people for two weeks, and include ferry crossings with car. Prices go from £80 to £450 per person. Putting the car onto motorable adds £180 including couchettes.
Vacances Franco-Britanniques, 1 St Margaret's Terrace, Cheltenham, Glos GL51 4DT. (0242 158353).

ADVANCED ENGINEERING



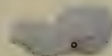
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West Germany. £24m of new catalytic



Spain. 340,000 wiper systems went across to fight the rain on the plain last year.

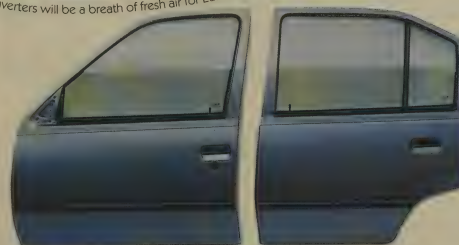
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Greetings from AD110

DAVID KEYS

London's oldest letter ever sent through a postal service has been unearthed near Hadrian's Wall

What appears to be the earliest surviving letter ever "posted" in London has been unearthed by archaeologists near Hadrian's Wall. Written around AD110 by a German bearing the extraordinary name of Chrauttius, the letter is addressed to a member of the staff of the Roman governor of Britain, who at that time may have been an Italian aristocrat called Atilius Metilius Bradua.

The letter—written in black ink on a 2mm sliver of alderwood—was probably sent through the Roman military postal service, a system known as the *Cursus Publicus*! It is addressed to Chrauttius's brother Veldedeius, one of the governor's staff who appears to have been stationed at the northern British frontier fort of Vindolanda, the ruins of which survive in Northumberland.

Roman military units were often dispersed at several locations, and it is possible that the two brothers were members of the same unit, one stationed in London, the other in Vindolanda. In the letter Chrauttius asks for news of their parents, and ticks Veldedeius off for not having written to him.

The full text, translated from Latin says: "Chrauttius to Veldeius (sic) his brother and former mess-mate, very many greetings. And I ask you, brother Veldeius—for I am astonished that you have sent me no reply for such a long time—whether you have heard anything from our parents, or what unit Quotus is in [there is doubt over this name due to unclear script] and you will greet him from me in my own words and you will ask Virilis the vet whether you may send me, through one of our friends, the shears which he promised me for a price. And I ask you, brother Veldeius, to greet from me our sister Thuttena. Write back and tell us how Velbuteius is getting on. I wish you the best of fortune. Farewell."

On the front of the letter is written the name of the addressee—"Veldedeio Equisioni Cos", which translated reads "To Veldedeius, equerry of the governor." Above the addressee's name is the word "Londini", probably a form of the

locative case of Londinium and is most likely to mean "at London". Given that the letter was found among the remains of the headquarters building at the Roman frontier fort of Vindolanda, and bearing in mind that officers' families did live at the fort, it seems probable that "at London" refers to the location of the sender.

Veldedeius may not just have served on the northern frontier but also may have died there. East of Vindolanda at Rudchester, two

world. The manuscript lists the disposition of groups of soldiers from a Roman military unit—the Cohort of Tungrians—based at the Fort of Vindolanda.

It reveals that 12 of the units troops—11 soldiers and a centurion—were stationed in London while 336 were in Coria (modern Corbridge), 16 were serving with the governor and fewer than 10 were seconded to a high official called Ferox, probably the provincial procurator, who was the

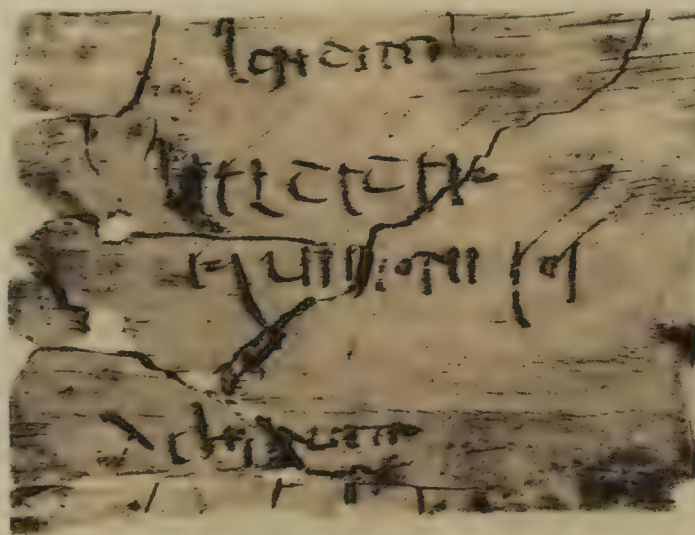
ably built to accommodate them. The governor himself lived in a vast palace which covered 30,000 square metres and overlooked the Thames near what is now Cannon Street Station. If Chrauttius was a senior official in the service of the governor, then it may be that the letter was written inside the palace.

The pair of Vindolanda documents bearing the word London are only two of more than 1,100 Roman writing tablets unearthed at the fort over the past four years. This year alone, 165 have come to light. One letter refers to the appalling state of the roads in December. A man called Octavius, a grain and cattle-hide supplier, tells his client Candidus that the roads are so dreadful that he cannot even send his mules out. Another Roman commanding officer, faced with possible delays in delivering freight, writes to his friend at a stores depot: "If you love me, brother, please send me the goods."

So far, texts in more than 600 different hands have been found, indicating the high degree of literacy in the Roman army. Slaves working at the fort also appear to have been literate. One, called Severus, writing to another slave, asks: "Can you buy an item which I need for the Saturnalia celebration—and some radishes?" Saturnalia was the pagan predecessor of Christmas.

The most amusing tablet discovered so far was almost certainly written by a child—probably by one of the sons of Vindolanda's commanding officer at the end of the first century AD, Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the ninth cohort of Batavians (troops from what is now Holland). It is an inaccurately reproduced excerpt, written in capitals, from Virgil's *Aeneid*; and underneath is probably the opinion of the child's tutor—the word "seg", written in joined-up script, which is most likely to be an abbreviation for the word "segnis", meaning "sloppy" or "lazy".

The Vindolanda excavation project is being directed by Robin Birley, while the texts are being transcribed by papyrologists Dr Alan Bowman of Christchurch, Oxford, and Dr David Thomas of Durham University ■



In the mail: an excerpt from the Roman letter

miles north of Hadrian's Wall, a Roman tombstone was found commemorating an individual by the name of Vilidedius. The name is not a common one and it is quite possible that the recipient of the London letter and the man whose remains lay buried near Hadrian's Wall were the same person. Variations in the spelling of the name were not significant because names were frequently spelt in various ways in Roman times. It is spelt in different ways in the text of Chrauttius's letter and on the front of it.

A second document bearing the name London has also been unearthed at Vindolanda and it dates from about AD90. It is the earliest positively dated example of the word London ever found by archaeologists anywhere in the

Chrauttius to Veldeius his brother and former mess-mate, very many greetings. And I ask you, brother Veldeius—for I am astonished that you have sent me no reply for such a long time—whether you have heard anything from our parents

imperial civil servant with responsibility for Britain's finances. The actual document found at Vindolanda is probably the fort commanding officer's copy of a unit disposition report sent periodically to the governor himself. Every regiment in the provinces had an obligation to provide troops for the governor's retinue. Indeed, the Cripplegate fort, remains of which can still be seen, was prob-



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Playing the game

MATTHEW FORT

"It's not how you muck things up," said Stephen. "Anyone can muck things up. It's the putting right that counts." And with that bit of *Reader's Digest*-style wisdom, he turned and vanished through the front door. Stephen had quite a lot of putting right to do. He had left the main course behind.

I suppose that in the very best circles you don't ask your guests to bring their own food. The trouble was that for once I was deficient in pigeons, and one of my brothers-in-law claimed that he had never had an English pigeon, couldn't imagine what such a thing would taste like and was sure they could not possibly equal the rare quality of the African variety.

I won't have the virtue of English pigeons impugned by anyone, particularly not in October. Pigeons in October are at their peak; fat as butter, sweet and juicy, with just a hint of woodsmoke muskiness about them. Or that was how I described them to my doubting brother-in-law. Nettled, I telephoned Stephen, who always keeps a few dozen pigeons in the freezer for emergencies. A good man in a crisis, or so I thought.

"My dear chap, delighted. No problem. I'll just pop them in the microwave to defrost them. I know you don't approve of these new-fangled devices, but they have their uses. Be with you about eight."

He wasn't. It was about 8.20pm when he and his delectable wife rolled in. That is a little late, in my view, for your game supplier to swan through the door without the main course. He did have the grace to look a trifle stricken, and the good sense to vanish back from whence he had come before I had time to take my filleting knife to him.

So we sat down and consoled ourselves with a bottle or so of the tremendously delicious champagne of Alfred Gratien, vintage 1979. I must say, when the nerves are frayed and the food delayed, there is no more cheering beverage than champagne. So by the time my good friend burst back through the door I was quite prepared to radiate benevolence and good cheer. It was but the work of a moment to lift off the breasts and the legs, sear them

When the pigeon supplier turns up empty handed drastic measures and good humour are called for

in a little oil, flood the pan with some chicken stock to poach them and hurl myself on the oysters that furnished the first course.

"There is nothing in Christianity or Buddhism to match the self-sacrifice of the oyster," Saki wrote. Hear! hear! These were three dozen of the finest Whitstables bought from Sweetings, the fish restaurant in the City.

A squeeze of lemon, a gush of

mouth and a small glass of marsala. Reduce, reduce, reduce. Scrape all those interesting bits that are stuck to the bottom of the pan. Reduce some more and taste. Oh god, it's really terribly boring. Reduce it much more and we shall all be eating burnt rubber.

While I am in spiritual torment, the chatter goes on. They haven't noticed anything yet. Inspiration. But what? For vegetables we have



DIANA LEADBETTER

briney glop in the mouth, a slippery sensation in the throat and, hey presto, there's another one gone. Pausing only occasionally for a sip of the sensational, gooey Chassagne Montrachet 1983 of Gagnard-Delrange, we raced through them. It may have been a brave man who first ate an oyster, as King James said, but it would have been a fool who didn't afterwards gorge himself on these little beauties.

I pressed the pigeon's breasts with my thumb. They were firm, but there was still a bit of bounce to them, so I reckoned they were ready for the next stage, which was to be popped into the oven to keep warm while I tried to magic something together which I could call "sauce". First of all, turn up the heat to reduce the stock. While it's seething away, add a small glass of white port, a small glass of ver-

the last of the garden crop—carrots, beetroot and their tops, and climbing beans. Nothing very inspiring about that lot. Then there's the polenta to bulk things up. I've cooked that, let it cool down and go solid, and cut it into lozenges which are hissing in the frying pan—an Italian touch. Italians and pigeons. Italians and game. Chocolate! An old Sicilian trick. That's it! I'll add some chocolate. It can't be worse.

So, I pop in a couple of squares of cooking chocolate, stir them around, and yes, by gosh, we've got something here. Perhaps it just needs a touch of vinegar of some kind to bring it into focus. A dash of balsamic vinegar and there we have it. In some mysterious way all those flavours, which had hitherto been masked and muddled,

become, well, rather delicious. Quick, quick, to plate, to plate. A lozenge of fried polenta in the centre, a fat breast on either side, a leg at either end on a little cushion of green beet leaves, and the carrots and beetroots arranged tastefully all around. And the sauce, a spoonful over each breast. They can't complain about that little lot, particularly in view of the circumstances.

I needn't have worried. They had already broached the Sforsat. It's not an elegant name, nor can I really claim that it is an elegant red wine. It is far too rich and interesting for that. Sforsat comes from Valtellina, and is one of the *vini passiti* in which some *savants* would have us believe, the true genius of Italian wines reside. It is made from partly dried grapes, which concentrates both flavour and sugar, and hence produces wine like knock-out drops—this is 14.5 per cent and pretty sensational on the tongue, too. To describe our guests as drunk would probably do them an injustice, but there was definitely more than just the gleam of natural bonhomie about their faces as they fell upon my little pigeon number.

Those who stomach my pieces regularly will know that at this stage comes the cheese, but let me tell you about the *millefeuille de poires au coulis de mûres* instead. Making puff pastry is a nerve-racking and time-consuming business which you will find described at all necessary length in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Bertolde, Child and Beck. Only people who are mad attempt to do it. Luckily I am only insane about once every five years, but I was quite pleased with the way it turned out. A great deal of the butter may have leached out in the baking, but the multi-layers were definitely there, and by golly it tasted good. And, no, I didn't whip it up when waiting for the pigeons to arrive, in case you're wondering. I had a bit left over from my wife's birthday dinner a few days before.

So genial had we become that I was almost prepared to forgive Stephen for his earlier omission. Then he made it 1,000 times worse. "There's an article in this," he said. ■

Matthew Fort is co-author of the Peter Fort column of the *Financial Times*

Simply French

KINGSLEY AMIS

A comfortable local bistro, specialising in seafood, that is Père Michel in Bayswater

This restaurant is tucked away between Lancaster Gate tube station and Sussex Square and is rather a pest to find. Being in a cul-de-sac it is even more of a pest to drive to and is best reached on foot. That, I guessed, was how most of its customers arrived, having come from round about, though at lunch-time I spotted a probable yuppie or so from farther afield. Once there, however, one enjoys a friendly welcome in a pleasant little bistro-like room with French provincial touches. It must be said that not many bistros prepare their food so devotedly or give such good service. One tiny cavil: when my wine is on the table in front of me I am quite capable of pouring it myself.

Père Michel calls itself a French restaurant and does so in the French language too, but any suspicions this may set up are soon lulled by a study of the menu, which obligingly and properly subjoins an English translation of everything. Nor that any great feat of understanding would be called for anyway, the choice being kept within bounds and dishes simply prepared in the better and older French way. Any hint of the *nouvelle* is blessedly absent.

The starters include the right sort of old reliables like asparagus, avocado and artichoke. Fried mushrooms belong there too, I suppose, but the ones I had were lifted well out of the ordinary by being crisp, flavoury and—what can I say?—beautifully fried, an underrated skill in this country. The same went for my fried chunks of camembert, a dish so easy to get down that it overcame my qualms at its slight air of trendiness.

At lunch my guest had a splendidly unmucked-about-with and generous bowl of *moules mornay*. From the evening specials she picked oysters, which perhaps foreseeably turned out to be of the long, narrow, continental or Portuguese kind. She didn't mind that (though I would have done), but there was more salt in them than she cared for. There may be a national difference of taste here, as some British



Few bistros prepare food so devotedly

PATRICK GORMAN

eaters in France have deduced.

The main menu emphasises fish and seafood with just three regular meat dishes: lamb, veal in the Normandy style with apple, cream and calvados, and *filet de boeuf*. Two or three straightforward ways of cooking salmon, sole, langoustines, scallops and lobster are on offer, with a "Catalan plate" thrown in as a sort of joker: a very successful and enjoyable *mélange* of lobster and white fish in what was more like a rich fishy gravy than a sauce. My breaded sole was unsensational but sound; same with the vegetables. The bread is rather below French standards.

So far, so good, and perhaps only a fool or a restaurant writer pokes his nose into the meats in a fish restaurant. The trouble is that if you want to drink something red—really red, not one of those tinted whites from the Loire—you will find yourself inexorably swept towards red meat. Oh, well. The



veal turned out below par, toughish, dryish. My best end of lamb with rosemary impressed me, not to say depressed me, with its size. What for a moment I took for a whole animal carcass turned out to be six not very small lamb cutlets, a dish for two if I ever saw one, and requiring my own inexpert surgery before being consumable at all. For

one of my girth I think I must have a rather small appetite; anyway, I found it too much like hard work to get more than about halfway through that mass of tasty but (I have to say it) not too tender protein. Could waiters perhaps warn at the menu stage that such-and-such a dish is more than a mouthful and chefs be ready to provide a reduced portion when asked in such cases?

The finishers were thoroughly up to standard, the *crème brûlée* so good that my guest could not be persuaded to try something else on our second visit, my apple tart satisfyingly juicy, genuine and farmhouse. Cheeses were varied and all in good condition.

The wine list is, of course, short, starting with several under £10 and under £20, ascending to £95 for a 1975 Château Lafite. It is also, of

6 *The choice being kept within bounds and dishes simply prepared in the better and older French way. Any hint of the nouvelle is blessedly absent* 9

course, exclusively French. This is rather a pity when some variety and better value could be introduced by providing a selection from other countries, especially the Antipodes and Portugal. French food no doubt demands French wine in France. Not here, with our own ingredients, stoves, climate, etc.

Everywhere should have a small, comfortable restaurant round the corner, offering (on the whole) good food at reasonable prices efficiently and politely served. Those round the corner from Père Michel are in luck ■

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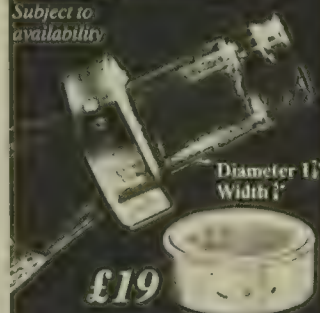
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MISTRESS OF COVENT GARDEN

BY STEPHEN FAY

For years the Spanish

actress Nuria Espert turned down

invitations to direct

theatre. She finally conceded with

"The House of Bernarda Alba",

one of the most successful plays

staged in London in recent

years. Now, more determined than ever

and blessed with infectious

enthusiasm, Espert is making history

at Covent Garden

Nuria Espert becomes the first woman for 31 years to direct a new production at the Royal Opera House when her *Rigoletto* opens on December 8. She cannot read music and directed her first opera only last year—in Glasgow.

That was Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, which she originated with Scottish Opera 18 months ago and which opened only a few months after Espert—one of the most celebrated actresses in Spain—had directed a play on stage for the first time. But, while one might expect an actress to turn to play direction, it is remarkable that she should turn to opera. Her presence in the Royal Opera House is the culmination of a set of fortuitous coincidences.

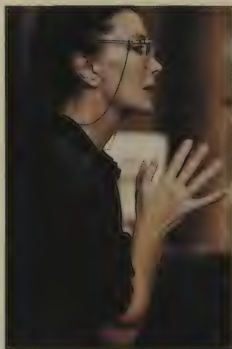
Despite her inexperience as a director, Espert does not take long to establish her authority, and she had done so at Covent Garden in October, when the singers were working as closely with her as members of a conspiracy.

Espert looks typically Spanish. In repose, she seems severe; her eyes are wide-set and black, and her hair is combed straight back. But she is quick to laugh and appears gentle and modest, tucking her legs under her small, wiry body to talk about her new career as a director, a departure she undertook at the age of 51.

The British were not the first to invite Nuria Espert to direct but, because of the timing of their approach, their request was the first she accepted. She has been the leading actress in her own company in Spain for more than 25 years. "Everybody asked me to direct, but I said, 'No, I have not time. I want to be a great, great actress. For that I need all my energy and all my thoughts'." (She speaks English well, but not well enough to mask her opinions or emotions.)

Three years ago, Espert finally began to feel the strain of meeting her high acting standards ("My heart was tired"). Peter James, of the Lyric Hammersmith, was wanting to revive the reputation of Federico García Lorca; Espert was the most distinguished stage interpreter of his work, so James asked her to direct a new English translation of *The House of Bernarda Alba*. He could not have known how shrewd his timing was.

Nonetheless, Espert's first response was to refuse, but James had added a postscript to his letter indicating that Glenda Jackson was interested in playing the lead. Espert and Jackson are members of an international theatrical network, with Peter Brook in Paris at its centre. Brook befriended Espert during periods of her exile from General Franco's Spain, and he had spoken highly to her of Jackson. "I found that very interesting, very exciting. That



ZOE DOMINIC

makes me change," she says. A second lucky step.

Simultaneously, in Glasgow, John Cox was looking for a glamorous Continental name to direct at Scottish Opera. He tried Giorgio Strehler in Milan and when he refused, Cox, who did not know Espert but who had seen her work, thought it might be worth asking her. And it was. Espert loves listening to opera,

especially Puccini and Verdi, but since she had never directed anything at all, she would not commit herself until after the opening of *Bernarda Alba* in October, 1986. The play won her the *Evening Standard* award for Best Director and it transferred to Shaftesbury Avenue festooned with other awards. She had enjoyed working with a cast that included Joan Plowright as well as Jackson. She did want to do it again and, for good measure, took Strehler's designer, Ezio Frigerio, with her to Glasgow.

Espert's *Butterfly*, boldly set in a tenement in Japan after the Second World War, opened in April, 1987, and was greeted by further acclaim: "One of the most revelatory stagings of the opera in 25 years," said *The Times*. After a nervous start, she had impressed her new colleagues with her sympathy for singers.

Now the last in the set of coincidences was about to occur. Until recently the Royal Opera House has been chilly about the work of provincial companies. But when the new general director, Jeremy Isaacs, took over in September, he told colleagues that he would welcome work from Scottish Opera, from Welsh National Opera and from Glyndebourne.

Isaacs did not have long to wait. Besides bringing *Butterfly* to London, the Opera House also commissioned *Rigoletto* with the soprano June Anderson. Moreover, Scottish Opera was told that Covent Garden would be interested in Espert's production of Verdi's *La traviata* which opens next spring in Glasgow. And they told Espert that they would want a new *Carmen* as well. Not bad for a beginner.

Nuria Espert is a child of the Spanish Civil War who grew up in Barcelona on the losing side. Her father had fought with the Anarchists and for years was denied work as a carpenter. Though the family was Catalan and spoke that language, Nuria had to be educated in Spanish. She began to act when she was an adolescent and it provided her with a freedom which she exploited as ruthlessly as she was able. She left school at 16; by 19 she had played *Medea* in Barcelona and was married to a writer.

She was a determined young woman who rejected the orthodox method of advancing a Spanish actor's career: a choice between the stuffy Teatro Nacional in Madrid and light comedy in Barcelona. Instead, she and her husband formed their own company in 1959 and toured Spain with a repertory that grew increasingly adventurous. Starting with Colette's *Gigi*, they moved on to Lorca (when it was at last permissible to play him) and to Genet. She also

played *Hamlet* (himself) and was both Prospero and Ariel in *The Tempest*.

Franco's régime in Spain forced her to establish a style of her own. "We started from the very beginning. All the tradition was out and over and finished. It was very hard and very exciting. We became very strong, very intelligent, very alive and clever at evading the censorship." Once the authorities understood her meaning, they banned her.

Espert's company was aligned with the left, which is where she remains; but Spain is a different country today and the fierce republicanism of people like her is now compromised by the existence of genuine democracy.

She has a "very good" ear and a "fantastic" memory for music. Although she cannot read the score, she can sing her favourite operas which she learned by listening to records at

home. Her stage experience dictates her style: she does not admire prima donnas on either side of the pit. "The composer is like a director; he is telling me what he wants and I am listening to him. Around the composer are the conductor and the singers, and the director is in the second circle. If you love music more than yourself, more than your career, you behave like that. I love Puccini and Verdi more than my success."

While she was rehearsing *Madama Butterfly* with a new cast—led by the American soprano Catherine Malfitano (as Gio-Cio-San) and Arthur Davies from English National Opera (as Pinkerton)—and then *Rigoletto*, she was still learning every day, still excited and still frightened, but taking it in her stride. "I think I am capable to create a good atmosphere around me, and I am not tense or angry or nervous." As well as self-taught, Nuria Espert is self-possessed.

She has two daughters, one is a dancer with the Lindsay Kemp Company, the other is a director working in Spain. Both were educated in English schools in Spain. Her husband runs the company in Madrid and they also have houses in Barcelona and Valencia. Her story is a fine romance, dictated by a benevolent fate and littered with the kind of lucky coincidences that would make a writer blush to have put them in an opera libretto. After her *Rigoletto* Espert returns to Glasgow for *La traviata*. "I love the Scottish Opera so much. It was dangerous for them to have me, and I am so grateful." She will be back in London later in 1989 to direct Joan Plowright in the 17th-century Spanish epic, *La Celestina*, at the National Theatre.

Besides coming to London *La traviata* will be seen in Madrid in 1990 when the Spanish will discover what they have been missing ■



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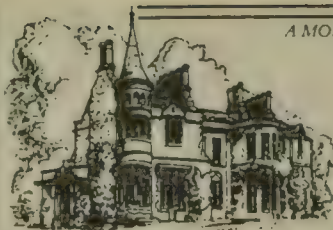
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The brilliance and boredom of Roger Rabbit

BY NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE

Bob Hoskins is at large in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*

Some gods of the screen come unexpectedly to acting. Lana Turner was discovered while sipping soda at Schwab's drugstore. In much the same way Bob Hoskins, five-feet-five-inches and cubic ("My own mother wouldn't call me pretty"), was disinterred at the bar of the Unity Theatre, St Pancras, when a man handed him a script, pointed to the stairs and said "You're next".

That was in 1971. Since then Hoskins has given up window-cleaning and punched out a nice little corner for himself as an actor who can play the tender side of tough. With *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*—which made a record gross of \$11.2 million in its first three days in America—he likes to think he has shuffled off in a new direction. "At last," he told his biographer, Karen Moline, "a film my kids can go and see and be proud of later on."

Such is Hollywood's capacity for hype, you would have to be a Trappist lighthouse-keeper never to have heard of Roger Rabbit—the latest addition to a long history of cinematic preoccupation with animals that includes Mickey Mouse, King Kong, E.T. and, of course, the great white shark in *Jaws*.

It would be a mistake to call the story simple. Set in 1947 in Hollywood, it is fuelled by the uneasy relationship between human movie-makers and the celluloid fantasies that have made their trade so popular, cartoon characters who commute from the Hollywood suburb of Toontown. Hoskins plays a down-and-out private eye roped in by Roger Rabbit, a Toon suspected of murder who, in turn, suspects his beautiful Toon wife, Jessica, of adultery.

At its most elemental, Robert Zemeckis's film—and I imagine the book from which it derives by Gary K. Wolf—plays on our habit of reducing those around us into two-dimensional projections of our fears and fantasies. To get through the everydayness of life without shooting ourselves, we turn others

into manageable, dismissable cartoons. Hence policemen become weasels, waiters penguins and a beautiful woman, like Jessica, a shapely artifice with "more curves than Mulholland Drive". As she says so seductively, "I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way."

The first third of the film is captivating. Much has been said of Richard Williams's animation, but it does knock that of *Mary Poppins*

of Edmund Wilson's essay "Who cares who killed Roger Ackroyd?"

In the *Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Bob Hoskins pops up in bed-sit Dublin as James Madden, a businessman who has returned from America, without having enjoyed much success there in the hotel trade. While staying at his sister's boarding-house, he falls for one of those at the breakfast table—a middle-aged piano teacher called



Hoskins stars with Williams's animations, Jessica and, below, Roger Rabbit

or *Fantasia* (in which Mickey Mouse cavorted with Stokowski) into a cocked hat.

The rabbit Williams pulls out, followed by a troupe of similarly engaging creations, is little short of magical. There are also one or two good lines: "She's the cream in my coffee—You'd better stop drinking it white." "Is that a rabbit in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?" "I've loved you more than any woman ever loved a rabbit."

But you can get used to anything, even magic. The problems set in once we try to get on with the story. Three good lines don't make a script and although Bob Hoskins makes a fine fist of things, he leaves us with the sense that he has been acting with thin air. The last third of the film drags so much I found myself thinking with some remorse

Judith Hearne (Maggie Smith). His affection is much complicated by his desire to erect hamburger bars on every corner of Dublin's fair city, and his mistaken belief, looking at her bejewelled rings through the bottom of his whiskey glass, that Judith Hearne might be the perfect partner in this venture. Judith Hearne is looking, doggy-eyed, for a partner of another kind and is in fact not very rich. The whole thing ends in sadness, madness and alcohol, without a hamburger in sight.

Peter Nelson's adaptation of Brian Moore's fine novel makes full use of boarding-house asphyxiations. Each room, hideously papered in a dirty waterfall of pink roses, is the repository of its tenant's dreams, superstitions and depravities. Upstairs, the son of the house—a tower of ugliness, wonderfully played by Ian McNeice—is in bed with the red-headed maid, a girl who bears more than a passing resemblance to a Tibetan yak. Downstairs, to the tune of their bed-springs, and caught between the photographic effigies of her lunatic Catholic aunt and Jesus Christ, Miss Hearne drinks herself legless.

As with many of her performances, Maggie Smith gives the impression that she is rather more than perfect for the part of a lonely spinster. Looking at her under his dark brows, which resemble two sleeping slugs, and caressing his cane broly handle, Bob Hoskins suggests a Chicago gangster with the most unwieldy of bulks under his lapel—a heart. Their clumsy *pas de deux* is touching; it ends with Maggie Smith clambering up the very barricades she has erected against the outside world. As to why the view from the top should be so bland, I don't know. A worthy affair, full of fine acting (Wendy Hiller and Marie Kean particularly) and marvellously stifling moments, I somehow wanted to like this film more than I did ■

Nicholas Shakespeare is Literary Editor of *The Daily Telegraph*.



6 The problems set in once we try to get on with the story. Three good lines don't make a script... the last third of the film drags 9

Ned of Arabia

the real Lawrence

BY JOHN MCEWEN

The centenary show at the National Portrait Gallery exposes the reality beneath the legendary romance

The Lawrence, or Lawrence of Arabia, would have been 100 years old on August 16. To mark the centenary the National Portrait Gallery is holding an exhibition of nearly 400 items, from the well-known sketch by Augustus John to a 15th-century English beaker which the youthful Lawrence discovered and presented to the Ashmolean Museum during his freshman year at Oxford.

Lawrence, like most heroes, is forever being taken down a peg. The consensus among old Arabian hands seems to be that he was "not a gentleman", and reading Jeremy Wilson's excellent catalogue introduction it becomes clear that this is a fair assessment. Lawrence was not quite the gentleman, either by birth or inclination, but he was a hero and a romantic one at that. "I am not a very tractable person or much of a hero-worshipper, but I could have followed Lawrence over the edge of the world," wrote John Buchan in his autobiography. And what a world it had been, surely the most haunting this earth can offer: the thunderous mountains and empty deserts of old Arabia; then under Turkish occupation. The names themselves are a call to arms: Aleppo, Hejaz, Akaba.

All his life Lawrence was a prey to secrecy and inner conflict, which may have stemmed from the shameful knowledge, discovered early but never admitted, that he was a bastard. His father was called Thomas Chapman and had a legal wife and four daughters in Ireland. He had fallen in love with the governess and, when his wife refused a divorce, eloped with her to England where he embarked on a new life under the name of Lawrence. T.E. or Ned Lawrence turned out to be the second of the five sons of this second "marriage". He was brought up in Oxford in comfortable circumstances, though he denied this when talking to a biographer.

As a boy Lawrence soon showed independence. He preferred physical tests of endurance to team games, read a lot and even ran away



T. E. Lawrence in 1935: his life was torn between sentimentalism and self-denial

from home in a frustrated attempt to become a soldier. But he shone at English and was most enthused by medieval history, which in turn led to an interest in archaeology. This interest in the romance of chivalry and the hard facts of archaeological evidence bridged what he later recognised as a profound division in his nature, between sentimental hedonism and spartan self-denial.

Life in Arabia seems to have offered Lawrence the same consolation. In 1909 he spent three months travelling rough in the Near East, studying crusader castles for his thesis on medieval military architecture. It won him a First, and his future as an archaeologist seemed assured. More significantly, his burgeoning love of Arabia was consolidated when he returned to northern Syria in 1910 as an unsalaried assistant on an expedition for the British Museum.

It was in these post-war years that another secret emerged, only to be tucked away—his homosexuality. In these years, too, his yearning for a chivalrous cause found deliverance in his support of the Arabs against the Turks. When the

privity to secret agreements between Britain and her allies which made it clear that Arab self-government would not be tolerated by the imperial powers after the war. So, throughout, he had been knowingly betraying people who had come to think of him as their closest foreign friend.

The strain that the war imposed on Lawrence was enormous. He was the first British officer to serve in the field with the Arab forces, and had been wounded several times. He had also suffered months of ill-health. When he arrived back in England in 1918 he weighed six stone. An inkling of what he had gone through can be gauged by his later support of the abolition of the death penalty for those found guilty of cowardice in combat. "I have run too far and too fast under fire to dare throw a stone at the fearfulest creature. You see, I might hit myself in the eye."

The 15 years remaining to Lawrence were spent confronting and dodging the awful responsibilities, expectations, confusions and guilts of being the most revered man in the world. It was a period of self-torture—much of it spent, like his father, under a false name—which ended when he crashed into a tree on his motorbike.

Unavoidably, this is a book-on-the-wall sort of exhibition, which does everything but raise Lawrence from the dead. You can see his tent, his rifle—the notches in its woodwork supposedly signifying the number of Turks he shot with it—even the Brough motorbike (now repaired) on which he had his fatal crash. As soldier, politician, scholar and artist he knew everyone. He also enlisted the help of most of the leading English portraitists of the day to illustrate his famous chronicle of the revolt, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, so there are plenty of interesting paintings amid the relics. But the relics, that flotsam and jetsam of the legendary, are what matter. They, more than anything, speak of the apotheosis of Ned Lawrence into the romantic Lawrence of Arabia ■



Crusader: as the Arabian knight

First World War arrived he saw it as a God-sent opportunity for the Arabs to overthrow the Turks and repossess their homelands, and he did everything in his by then considerable powers to bring this about. The revolt came in 1916 and by the time Lawrence left, in 1918, an Arab military victory in strategically crucial Syria was assured.

But all through the revolt Lawrence had been hiding another of his secrets. This one was the most dreadful of all. He had stirred up the Arabs to fight for their independence; but all the time he had been

The Olivier's Fair

without fun

BY ALEX RENTON

Jonson's masterpiece is chilled by its National setting while Pinter's new play is short and sharp

A long-standing and entertaining private argument at the National Theatre is at last going public. Sir Peter Hall, in his time on the National throne, vociferously defended the complex's much criticised architect, Sir Denys Lasdun. Hall had to stand by the building at whose birth he assisted.

But his successor, Richard Eyre, has no such responsibility, and structural changes, it seems, are at last to be made to the Olivier. It was amusing that Lasdun should finally explode over Eyre's plans in the week when Eyre opened his first production in the Olivier as National supremo—a *Bartholomew Fair* that, in William Dudley's design, tries to use the cavernous Olivier by raising two fingers at it. Lasdun, wittily enough, chose as his platform an edition of the *Telegraph Magazine* devoted to a celebration of the National's first 25 years. He accused Dudley and design head John Gunter of acts of "absolute barbarism" in planning to "pull the [theatre's] walls down and change the position of the seating". "Brilliant designers—but they are not architects", fulminated the man who will be remembered for the joyous campus at the University of East Anglia.

Lasdun foot-shoots himself because the purpose of Dudley and Gunter is not to be architects, although they quite evidently know the job—of making a theatre work—better than he. The designers are not, after all, intending to alter the National's façade, rebuilding the damp-courses, say, to prevent the construction from looking like a sodden cardboard box during London's rainy season. The Olivier is their target, and the Olivier is a disaster—actors are terrified of it, audiences are cowed in it, the shows that have seemed to fit it (most notably Richard Eyre's own *Gyps and Dolls*) can be counted on one hand—and it is crying out for change.

This was never more apparent than at *Bartholomew Fair*, where I was placed nearer the stage than I



Anthony O'Donnell, David Burke and John Wells in the National's *Bartholomew Fair*



6 *A display cabinet of characters, full of colour but devoid of purpose . . . Very worrying was the audience: I've never seen so many solemn faces gathered for such a jolly caper*

have ever been. And if I had paid for my fourth-row seat I should have asked for my money back. Of a cast of nearly 40, only two, Michael Bryant and John Wells, acted at us. The others, and one could only sympathise with them, were pitching voice and action right up to the circle; it was a little like watching the Mr Men on television with the sound at maximum. This was despite Dudley and Eyre's decision to reduce the hangar of a stage by setting the comedy on a succession of self-contained toy sets: a model Victorian suburban living room for the scenes that establish the principal characters, a merry-go-round for the dubious fun of the fair.

The effect, though, is to diminish Jonson's extravagant and bawdy sketch of a day in the low-life, while reducing not at all the chill of the auditorium. Daunting though the full stage is, it could never be more usefully employed than to give a sense of the luxurious tumult of Jonson's Smithfield *en fête*, but this *Bartholomew Fair* is all detail and no bustle. Not that the approach gives us any great insight into Jonson's characters. Attempting to find much substance in the romp, other than a

pleasantly vicious puritan-bashing sideshow, proves a problem for every director. While glorious in a Hogarthian way for its picture of a vernacular London—a den of gulls, hypocrites and good-timers—the play is a collection of sub-plots without a complete story. Eyre makes it a display cabinet of characters, full of colour but devoid of purpose. Some of these are very entertaining: Wells's Judge Overdue, on an undercover mission to investigate the Fair, is a glorious fusion of prurience and pomposity. But very worrying was the audience: I've never seen so many solemn faces gathered for such a supposedly jolly caper. Jonson's sanctimonious Puritans could not have been less entertained.

Big-budget romps like this and *The Shogun* should prove a key element in Richard Eyre and David Aukin's programming at the National, allowing them to avoid the élitist label while raising the money for less populist, more subversive material. The curtain raiser for *Bartholomew Fair* does not exactly fit the latter category—it is, after all, Harold Pinter's first play in four years. *Mountain Language* is only 20 minutes and 900-odd words long; a work rate of some three words a week for Mr Pinter. Still, he has been busy with the plight of less fortunate writers through the organisation PEN, which this show will benefit. It's worth seeing, for the 900 words are very good words, rather moving and undoubtedly Pinteresque, and the cast is extraordinary: Michael Gambon as a brutal sergeant-major in an internment camp, George Harris as a guard, Miranda Richardson as an intellectual trying to visit her husband, and Tony Haygarth as an internee. The horrors are unmitigated, but I could certainly have done with more of them. Just when you get in the mood it stops: there's a frustrating sense of drama interrupted, and another—that at £3 it is costing you 1p every four seconds. "A part of his royalties" go to PEN's Writers In Prison Fund ■

From Pinkie to political prime

NASEEM KHAN

Feudal security gives way to power politics in the autobiography of Benazir Bhutto: *Daughter of the East*

There was no question of her being a political heir. At birth she was rosy-coloured with golden hair. "When your father saw you," her mother wrote to her in prison, much later, "he stared and stared at you, and then touched your face and hands, looking with wonder at the miracle of having such a lovely baby . . . He went round and round in a circle in the room with you in his arms—I can't go on with more details because my eyes are filled with tears for the beautiful days gone by."

Coming from a class that went in for cosy nicknames, she became known immediately as "Pinkie"—because of her infant glow. But to the outside world she is Benazir Bhutto, 35-year-old daughter of Pakistan's former prime minister and now a major contender for the country's imminent elections.

It is a development that would have startled those present at her birth. The women of the Bhutto family lived in seclusion then, went out veiled and married only other Bhuttos. The extensive family estates offered them both space and seclusion.

The change in Benazir's prospects, from feudal security to political power, is a remarkable story. If her autobiography *Daughter of the East* were that alone, it would be worth telling. But it is more than that. Benazir's story mirrors Pakistan's troubled political history. She is a product of it, having been turned into a politician almost instantly in the early hours of April 4, 1979—the night when General Zia-ul-Haq had her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, hanged. "I suddenly sat bolt upright in bed at 2am," she writes. "No! the scream burst through the knots in my throat."

Bhutto's overthrow and the imposition of martial law ended a period of personal security for Benazir. Eldest of four, she had been sent by her progressive father to study in America. Four years of Radcliffe, where she had flung herself into student life (anti-war



Bhutto's return: more than a million people greeted her in Lahore in 1986

demos, rock concerts, peppermint-stick ice cream), were followed by four years at Oxford. In 1977 she achieved her own and her father's dream—the presidency of the august Oxford Union. Armed with degrees and diplomas in government, she was all set for a diplomatic career. But unrest in Pakistan—destabilisation by America, she suggests—opened the doors to an army coup. Her father's chief of staff seized power, arrested and tried her father for the murder of an opponent, and had him hanged.

The effect on Benazir and her mother, Begum Bhutto, (her brothers being abroad) was trau-

matic. They threw themselves into political agitation, taking on the leadership of Bhutto's creation, the Pakistan People's Party. Both were frequently imprisoned. Both suffered appalling physical hardship. Begum Bhutto was finally allowed to go abroad for cancer treatment. Benazir, haggard and suffering from a neglected ear-drum infection, followed for a period in the west. Restored, she returned to Pakistan to a political struggle that until recently seemed to be a long shot. Nothing, however, is secure in politics and on August 17 this year Zia was blown to bits as his aeroplane took off.

Daughter of the East just manages to get in a postscript to cover the changed circumstance, but obviously the thrust of the book is an

6 Benazir emerges from the book with energy, intelligence and obsessiveness. The change in prospects is remarkable 9



A charismatic speaker, Bhutto drew large crowds



Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father



In mourning for her brother, Shah

indictment of Zia. It is as if Benazir has thrown a depth charge at a target that has gone away. But two other justifications for the book still hold good. When I talked at length to Benazir in the spring, she said her prime motivation for the book had been to put on record what it had been like to live under a dictatorship. *Daughter of the East* does that, and pays fitting tribute to the bravery of many men and women.

The book gives a useful insight into the character of a woman who now has a real chance of becoming Pakistan's leader. Despite the kind of sensationalism in writing that comes, one assumes, from alliance with a ghost, Benazir emerges from the book with energy, intelligence and obsessiveness. The people she writes about, though, are flat—notice is taken of them depending on whether they are loyal or not to the cause—with the sole exception of her adored father who is remembered for his distinctive warmth and vigour. But it is politics and its minutiae that concern Benazir most. When I met her we talked, among other things, about Shakespeare. What was her favourite play I asked? "Oh, *Julius Caesar*," she replied at once. Assassinations, power struggles, alliances. It is, as *Daughter of the East* shows, the obvious answer ■

Benazir Bhutto: *Daughter of the East*. Hamish Hamilton, £12.95

THIS MONTH'S BEST BOOKS

Fiction

Difficulties With Girls

by Kingsley Amis
Hutchinson, £11.95

Amis on top form with this 1960s assembly of characters working in book publishing or living in maisonettes on the South Bank, environments which the author exploits with relish while recalling a time when the swinging had already begun to stop.

Picture This

by Joseph Heller
Macmillan, £12.95

Joseph Heller was the author of *Catch-22*, one of the most brilliant of modern novels. *Picture This* must be by another writer of the same name, for it has little of the power and none of the humour of the earlier work.

Non-fiction

J. B. Priestley

by Vincent Brome
Hamish Hamilton, £16.95

A long and very readable (though not altogether well written) biography of the man who wrote more than 100 books and quite a few successful plays, spoke a good deal of common sense, slept with many, many women and tried to sleep with more, and is probably still best remembered as the author of *The Good Companions*, published in 1929.

America Observed

by Alistair Cooke
Reinhardt, £12.95

No one observes America with greater clarity and sympathetic humour than Alistair Cooke, whose weekly BBC *Letter from America* is still happily with us. There is only one such broadcast printed here, for these dispatches are in the main selected from those he sent to *The Guardian* from 1946 to 1972. Every one of them sparkles, indeed seems to have improved with age confirming him as the best interpreter of America of our time.

Murder and madness in Ballard's Berkshire

IAN THOMSON

J. G. Ballard's *Running Wild* is violent and insane, but never less than compelling

The fantasies of J. G. Ballard remain this side of lunacy by a hair's breadth. On receipt of a first draft of his 1972 novel *Crash!*, a reader from a respectable publishing house despaired that the author was "beyond psychiatric help". The book was a lurid investigation into the relationship between sex and cars and violence.

Violence barely controlled beneath the respectable surface crust of things: such is Ballard's obsessive theme, and he returns to it in *Running Wild* with a sometimes gleeful vengeance. As usual in Ballard, the fiction is set at a date in the near future on planet earth (he has no truck with interplanetary bogeymen). This time, the violence erupts on an exclusive estate in the small Berkshire town of Pangbourne.

Inexplicably, the 32 residents are murdered within the space of 10 minutes. Their deaths are described in prurient detail: crushed beneath the wheels of a Porsche, killed with the bolt of a crossbow, electrocuted by a booby-trapped exercise cycle, strangled by a pair of spring-loaded steel and bamboo callipers—a device used by the Viet Cong, we are told, to trap and kill American soldiers.

The narrator, Dr Richard Greville, a deputy psychiatric adviser to the Metropolitan Police, is puzzled. In his "forensic diaries" he calmly enumerates a few—decidedly lunatic—theories for the multiple killings: a misdirected military exercise leading to a group of inexperienced SAS trainees being directed to the wrong target; the work of the Baader-Meinhof gang or the French Action Directe; a unit of Soviet Spetsnaz commandos being parachuted on to the Pangbourne estate after a false war alert; an experimental nerve-gas projectile falling from an RAF aircraft and deranging a group of residents who could then have committed the murders.

This is black humour, a genre in which Mr Ballard excels and, as

usual, his lunacy is in the tone of calm reasonableness. The Pangbourne estate has become, we read, a "modern house of Atreus". The mystery is further compounded by the abduction of the murdered residents' 13 children. Perhaps they have been kidnapped by a rogue faction of the Mafia? Slowly, the pieces of the puzzle fall into place. Rooting about the estate one day, Dr Greville stumbles upon a stash of firearms publications hidden in a child's bedroom among copies of pornographic magazines. The doctor wonders whether it is not the missing children themselves who have perpetrated the atrocities—budding parricides, the lot of them.

Since this is half a detective novel, I shall not give the game away: suffice it to say that *Running Wild* is a disturbing challenge to cherished assumptions about the relationship between parents and children. It is all the more disturbing for its shades of Hungerford, its references to the psychopathic likes of Ian Brady and Charles Manson. The work of a moralist genuinely troubled by the shape of things to come on this our radioactive, riot-torn planet, *Running Wild* frightens like an unlucky number. It is never less than compulsively readable and may come as a surprise to those who discovered Ballard through *Empire of the Sun*, in many ways his most conventional novel ■

Running Wild. Hutchinson £5.95.



Ballard: master of fantasy

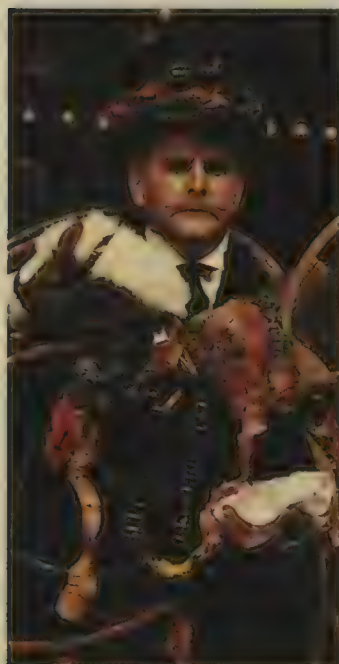
The capital list

Theatre

Where applicable, a special telephone number is given for credit card bookings. The address & number of each theatre are given only on the first occasion they appear in each section.

Bartholomew Fair. Richard Eyre directs Ben Jonson's classic. *Olivier, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (928 2252, CC).* REVIEW ON P 65.

Brigadoon. Big-budget revival of musical not seen for nearly 40 years. Two young American tourists stumble upon a Scottish town that reawakens only one day in every 100 years. Stars Jacinta Mulchay. Robert Meadmore & Lesley Mackie. *Victoria Palace, Victoria St, SW1 (834 1317, 828 4735, CC).*



Anthony O'Donnell plays Humphrey Wasp in *Bartholomew Fair*. Richardson and Gambon peak perfection in *Mountain Language*, and O'Shea and McKechnie do the *Can-Can*

Can-Can. Cole Porter's high-kicking musical, set among the Parisian *demi-monde* of the 1890s, stars the "Queen of Broadway" Donna McKechnie. Milo O'Shea & Bernard Alane co-star. *Strand, Aldwych, WC2 (836 2660, CC).*

The Churchill Play. Howard Brenton's passionate defence of democracy, written in 1974, gets a long overdue revival. Barry Kyle directs. *Barbican, EC2 (638 8891, CC).*

Divine Gossip. Stephen Lowe's musical comedy has a promising beginning but plummets well before the interval. Ripping songs from the 1920s & performances by Stella Gonet & Linus Roache slightly compensate for obvious lines, appalling magic tricks & a confusing plot. *The Pit, Barbican.*

The Father. First major London revival since 1964 of Strindberg's drama of conflict between the sexes. Directed

by David Leveaux & starring Alun Armstrong. *Cottesloe, National Theatre.*

Henceforward. Alan Ayckbourn's latest play (his 34th) asks the question: is life with a creative artist worth the effort? Ian McKellen plays Jerome, the most talented composer of the day, & Jane Asher is his estranged wife. *Vaudeville, Strand, WC2 (836 9987, CC).*

The Madwoman of Chaillot. Eleanor Bron, Jeffrey Chiswick & Hayne Ryan star in Maurice Valency's adaptation of Giraudoux's satirical comedy. Until Dec 10. *Lillian Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Ave, EC1 (278 8916, CC).*



Spin-off from the highly-rated TV series, with Jeremy Brett donning the deerstalker to make elementary work of the most complex cases Holmes ever faced. Edward Hardwicke co-stars as Watson. *Wyndham's, Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (867 1116, CC 867 1111).*

The Secret Rapture. David Hare's new morality play looks at 80s greed & the difficulties of behaving with integrity, through the responses of two sisters—one a new Tory, the other a sympathetic graphic artist—to their father's death. Penelope Wilton & Jill Baker star. Howard Davies directs. An uncomfort-

able evening. *Lyttelton, National Theatre.*

The Shaughraun. Spirited production of Dion Boucicault's 1870s melodrama, set in the west of Ireland. Howard Davies directs, Stephen Rea stars as the vagabond. *Olivier, National Theatre.* REVIEWED JULY, 1988.

The Sneeze. Collection of humorous one-act plays & short stories by Chekhov, newly translated & adapted by Michael Frayn. Ronald Eyre directs an impressive cast including Rowan Atkinson & Timothy West. Big names but lacking in substance. *Aldwych, WC2 (836 6404, CC).*

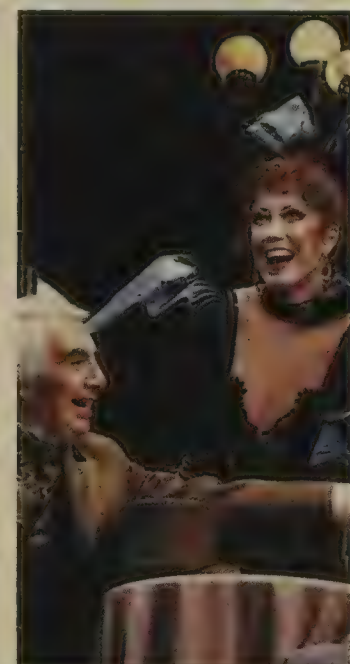
A Walk in the Woods. Russian & American statesmen find the best way to reach a compromise is through informality. Several walks in the woods provide the inspiration for the SALT disarmament agreements. Impressive cast includes Alec Guinness & Edward

Hermann. *Comedy, Panton St, SW1 (930 2578, CC 839 1438).*

First Nights

"Allo 'Allo". A big hit at the Prince of Wales last year (breaking all box office records), this stage version of the TV comedy series is once again scripted by Jeremy Lloyd & David Croft. Gordon Kaye heads the cast as the trouble-prone René. Opens Dec 21. *Palladium, Argyll St, W1 (437 7373).*

Candide. Bernstein's musical, based on Voltaire's satire, follows the adventures of two idealists, Candide & Cunegonde, as they discover the limitations of the real world. A co-production with Scottish Opera, directed by Jonathan Miller.



Opens Dec 2. *Old Vic, Waterloo Rd, SE1 (928 7616, CC 261 1821).*

Electra. Sophocles's tragedy stars Fiona Shaw as Electra & David O'Hara as Orestes in the first RSC production of a Greek play at the Barbican. Deborah Warner directs. Opens Dec 20. *The Pit, Barbican, EC2 (638 8891, CC).*

Making History. New play by Brian Friel based on the life of Hugh O'Neill (the Earl of Tyrone), leader of a rebellion against Elizabeth I. A Field Day Theatre Company production, starring Stephen Rea & directed by Simon Curtis. Opens Dec 5. *Cottesloe, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (928 2252, CC).*

Richard II. Derek Jacobi returns to the West End to play Shakespeare's king. Designs by Carl Toms. Opens Nov 28. *Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross Rd, WC2 (836 2294, CC 240 9661).*

School for Clowns. Ken Campbell's

THEATRE PICTURES: DONALD COOPER

Not to be missed

Lawrence of Arabia at the National Portrait Gallery and the film Bird

Stay clear of

The films High Spirits and Arthur II. Barry Manilow live at Ally Pally

translation of F.K. Waechter's comedy about four trainee clowns. "Suitable for adults who never grew up." Opens Dec 15. *Lillian Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Roseberry Ave, EC1* (278 3916, CC).

Single Spies. New double-bill from Alan Bennett. *An Englishman Abroad* tells the true story of Guy Burgess's meeting with Coral Browne in Moscow in 1958; stars Simon Callow & Prunella Scales, directed by Bennett. *A Question of Attribution* is based on an incident in the life of Anthony Blunt. This time Bennett stars and Callow directs. Opens Dec 1. *Lyttelton, Natonal Theatre.*

Stayers

Beyond Reasonable Doubt, Queens

play for three to nine-year-olds by Tina Williams. Presented by the Pied Piper Theatre Company. Opens Dec 20. *Fortune Theatre, Russell St, WC2* (836 2238).

A Christmas Carol. Adapted by David Holman for seven to 13-year-olds. Nov 24-Dec 31. *Young Vic, 66 The Cut, SE1* (928 6363).

Cinderella. Directed by Jim Davidson, who also stars as Buttons. Opens Dec 23. *Dominion, Tottenham Court Rd, W1* (580 9562).

The Magic Olympical Games. Non-sense songs written by Graeme Garden. Directed by Ken Campbell. Suitable for six to 11-year-olds. Opens Dec 8. *Oli-*

by Sheila Falconer. Opens Dec 17. *Barbican, EC2* (638 8891, CC).

Fringe

Asylum. A run-down mental institution is the venue for the shooting of a pop video. Sarah Miles stars. Until Dec 10. *Lyric, King St, W6* (741 2311, CC)

A Christmas Carol. On the 130th anniversary of Dickens's first reading, Charles Mugleston of the Charles Dickens Theatre Company gives a reading for the Wishing Well Appeal, Great Ormond St Hospital. Dec 3. St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, WC2 (entrance Bedford St). Carols 7.30pm, reading 8pm. £4, concessions £2.

Complicité at the Almeida. Reper-

Godfrey's new play is set in wartime Exeter where two schoolboys attempt to piece together a bomb from shrapnel they have collected. *Royal Court Upstairs.* **Still Life.** New play by Tony McHale, best known for his work on *East Enders*, about how an isolated violent incident can disrupt a household's unity. Until Dec 11. *New End Theatre, 27 New End, Hampstead, NW3* (794 0022).

When We Dead Awaken. Ibsen's master piece performed by The Company. Until Dec 10. *Mermaid, Puddle Dock EC4* (236 9521).

The Woman in White. A determined female amateur detective unearths unsavoury deeds in English suburbia.



Alun Armstrong in *The Father* with Susan Fleetwood. Dudley Moore stars as unlovable Arthur, with lovable Liza. And mighty mouse returns in *The Nutcracker*

(734 1166); **Cats**, New London (405 0072); **Chess**, Prince Edward (734 8951); **Follies**, Shaftesbury (379 5399); **42nd Street**, Drury Lane (836 8108); **Les Liaisons Dangereuses**, Ambassador's (836 6111); **Me & My Girl**, Adelphi (836 7611); **Les Misérables**, Palace (434 0909); **The Mousetrap**, St Martin's (836 1443); **The Phantom of the Opera**, Her Majesty's (839 2244); **Run For Your Wife**, Criterion (867 1117); **Starlight Express**, Apollo Victoria (828 8665); **Sugar Babies**, Savoy, The Strand, WC2 (836 8888).

Pantomimes & Children's Shows

Aladdin. Peter Duncan (of *Blue Peter*) directs & stars. Opens Dec 10. *Hackney Empire, 291 Mare St, E8* (985 2424).

Bertie Badger's Christmas Adventure. Only Bertie & chum Aristotle the tortoise can find the stolen necklace. A

vier, *National Theatre, South Bank, SE1* (928 2252, CC).

The Magician's Nephew. Adapted by Glyn Robbins from the book by C.S. Lewis, this is the story of two children who discover a secret world in an attic. Opens Nov 29. *Westminster Theatre, Palace St, SW1* (834 0283, CC 379 4444).

Postman Pat's Adventures. Children's favourite, with actors, not puppets. (A playcare centre is available before the shows, where children can be left safely while parents go Christmas shopping.) Opens Dec 8. *Royalty Theatre, Portugal St, WC2* (831 0660).

Sooty in Space. The grey bear boldly returns. Opens Dec 12. *Mayfair Theatre, Stratton St, W1* (629 3037).

The Wizard of Oz. John Kane's adaptation of the movie (complete with songs) aims to please adults as well. Directed by Ian Judge & choreographed

toire includes the Perrier-award-winning *More Bigger Snacks Now & Anything for a Quiet Life*, once described as "Kafka brought to hilarious & horrifying life". Don't miss it. Until Jan 21, 1989. *Almeida, Almeida St, N1* (359 4404, CC).

The Conquest of the South Pole. Traverse Theatre Company's production of Manfred Karge's disturbing new drama. Four unemployed young men play a bizarre game in which they pretend they are part of Amundsen's expedition. *Royal Court, Sloane Sq, SW1* (730 1745, CC).

Dreaming of Babylon. One-man adaptation by Kerry Shale of Richard Brautigan's story about a private detective's adventures in San Francisco in 1948. Opens Nov 29. *Gate Theatre, Pembridge Rd, W11* (229 0706).

Inventing a New Colour. Paul

Melissa Murray's adaptation of Wilkie Collins's novel is directed by Sue Dunderdale. Opens Dec 1. *Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, SE10* (858 7755).

Cinema

The following films are expected to be showing in London or on general release at some time during the month. Programmes often change at short notice. Consult a local or daily newspaper for exact locations & times.

Bird (15). Moving portrait of great jazz saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker, directed by Clint Eastwood & with a bravura performance from Forest Whitaker. Despite the magic of the music, we are never allowed to forget that the man's life was dominated by heroin. Eastwood has always been a fine director—*Play Misty For Me* & *The Outlaw Josey Wales* were sadly underrated. Opens Nov 25. Cannon Fulham Rd;

The capital list

Lumière, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (836 0691); *Screen on the Hill*, 203 Haverstock Hill, NW3 (435 3366).

Blue Jean Cop (18). Peter Weller (*Robocop*) cast against type as a gentle lawyer, teams up with grizzled detective Sam Elliott to root out corruption in the New York Police Department. Above average thriller, written & directed by James Glickenhaus. Opens Dec 2. *Cannon Prince Charles, Leicester Pl, WC2* (437 8181).

La Bohème (U). New film version of Puccini's opera directed by Luigi Comencini. In an acceptable departure from the libretto it takes us across the landing for shots of Mimi's narrow room and the table on which she makes artificial flowers. If Mimi's entrance into Rodolfo's life is more calculated than usually shown on the opera stage, the

McAnally among them—in a frantic adventure set in a haunted Irish castle. With such a great pedigree, it's disappointing that the film is so bland. Opens Dec 9. *Odeon Marble Arch, W1* (723 2011).

Kansas (15). Potentially interesting story of two drifters (Matt Dillon & Andrew McCarthy) who rob a bank & then double-cross each other. Never really takes off, partly due to director David Steven's ambition to make a statement about middle-American life.

Law of Desire (18). Antonio will go to any lengths to get Pablo's affections—even murder. Pedro Almodovar's gay love story is reminiscent of early Fassbinder, but with added humour. Lack of AIDS-consciousness is arguably a serious error; all the same this could be the most innovative movie to have

the grand tradition of English period-pieces, but never really ignites.

Sunset (15). The Western continues to make a revival with this tale of the embryonic Hollywood film industry's attempt to bring the story of Wyatt Earp to the silver screen—with Earp himself as "technical advisor". James Garner & Bruce Willis deal manfully with a laboured script. Blake Edwards directs. Opens Dec 16. *Cannon Panton St, SW1* (930 0631).

Veronico Cruz (15). Brave but controversial Anglo-Argentine co-production about a boy (Veronico Cruz) who grows up in a village in north-western Argentina, only to end his life on the *General Belgrano* during the Falklands war. Director Miguel Pereira skilfully avoids any partisanship. Excellent. REVIEWED NOV, 1988.

Sun 2-6pm. £2.50, concessions £1.50. PREVIEW ON P.64.

ROYAL ACADEMY
Piccadilly, W1 (439 7438).

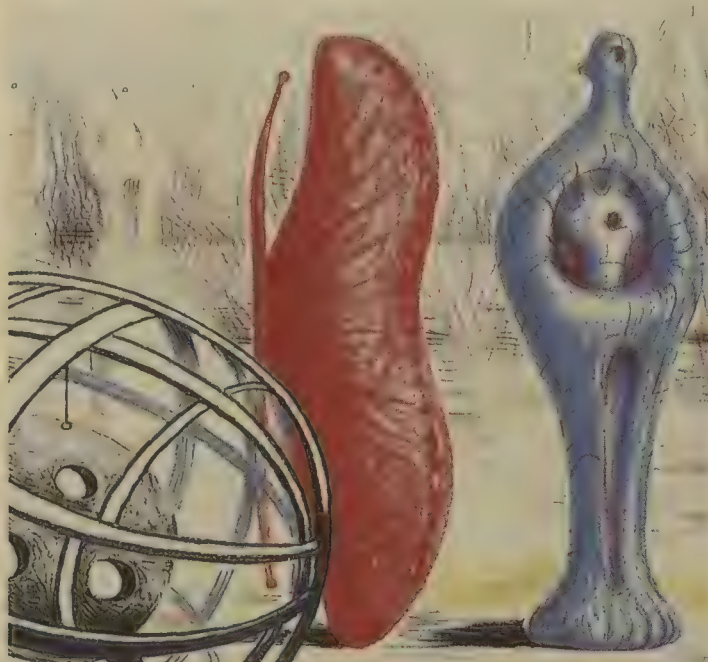
The London Original Print Fair. 29 dealers from Britain, Europe & the USA offer more than 6,000 prints for sale, dating from the Renaissance to the present day. Prices from £50 to £100,000. Dec 2-5. Daily 11am-6pm. £4, concessions £2.

SMITH'S GALLERIES
33a Shelton St, WC2 (836 9701).

Chantal Carron de la Carrière. Self-taught Parisian artist (though resident here for the past five years) who paints richly-textured landscapes. Dec 5-10. Daily 11am-7pm.

SUE WILLIAMS GALLERY
320 Portobello Rd, W10 (960 6123).

Thriving On Chaos—Art To Go.



Maggie Smith as Judith Hearne, with Bob Hoskins. Lithograph by Henry Moore at the London Original Print Fair. Barbara Hendricks sings Mimi in the film *La Bohème*

character is sensitively played by Barbara Hendricks. Luca Canonici mimes the role of Rodolfo, to the recorded voice of Jose Carreras, the tenor having fallen ill just before shooting began. Opens Dec 26. *Barbican, EC2* (638 8891, cc); *Chelsea Cinema, 206 King's Rd, SW3* (351 3742, cc).

Colors (18). Dennis Hopper directs Sean Penn & Robert Duvall in a tough tale of gang warfare in downtown Los Angeles. Some US critics slammed the film for glorifying violence.

Hellbound (18). 60 gallons of blood, 40 gallons of slime & three gallons of vomit are what it took to make this sequel to *Hellraiser*. Written & directed by Clive Barker... all in the best taste.

High Spirits (15). Neil Jordan (*Company of Wolves*) directs a star-studded cast—Peter O'Toole, Steve Guttenberg, Daryl Hannah & Ray

come out of Spain in the 80s.

The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne (15). Brian Moore's brooding novel gets the big-star treatment, with Maggie Smith as a lonely spinster who falls for con-man Bob Hoskins. Veteran Jack Clayton (*Room at the Top*, *The Great Gatsby*) directs. REVIEW ON P 63.

Stand & Deliver (15). Top marks for the true story of a teacher's struggle to teach advanced calculus to a class of under-privileged kids in Los Angeles. Edward James Olmos stars as Jaime Escalante. Directed by Ramon Menendez. REVIEWED NOV, 1988.

A Summer Story (15). Simpering toff Ashton (James Wilby, in grave danger of becoming typecast) falls for country wench Megan (Imogen Stubbs) with tragic consequences. Piers Haggard's adaptations of the John Galsworthy short story *The Apple Tree* is opulent in

Who Framed Roger Rabbit? (PG). Spielberg's \$48 million blockbuster mixes cartoon characters & live action in a way never attempted before. Opens Dec 2. *Odeon Leicester Sq. WC2* (930 6111). REVIEW ON P 63.

Exhibitions

Opening

REBECCA HOSSACK GALLERY
35 Windmill St, W1 (409 3599).

Shaun Brosnan—Leadworks. Sheet-lead is the medium for this remarkable set of human & animal sculptures. Nov 30-Dec 30. Mon-Sat 11am-7pm.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
St Martin's Pl, WC2 (930 1552).

Lawrence of Arabia. On the centenary of T. E. Lawrence's death, this comprehensive collection of material sheds light on the man behind the myth. Dec 9-Mar 12. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-6pm,

Drawn from a slide library of some of the brightest talent in the country; ceramics, sculpture, furniture & paintings for sale. Prices will be "affordable" & work may be taken away on purchase. Nov 30-Dec 31. Tues-Sat 10am-5.30pm.

Still showing

AUSTIN/DESMOND FINE ART
15a Bloomsbury Sq, WC1 (242 4443).

Post-War British Abstract Art. The work of two groups—the St Ives & Tachiste painters—is used in an attempt to prove that the British contribution to abstraction has been underestimated: features Patrick Heron, Sandra Blow & others. Until Dec 22. Mon-Fri 10.30am-6.30pm, Sat 10.30am-3pm.

BRITISH MUSEUM
Great Russell St, WC1 (636 4141).

Treasures for the Nation: Conserving our Heritage. Eclectic exhibition pays tribute to the work of the National

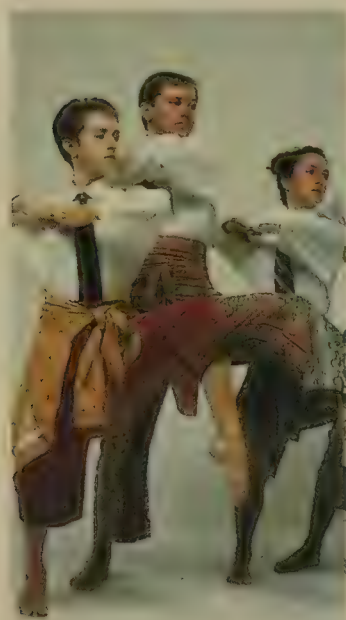
Heritage Memorial Fund. Includes Donald Campbell's record-breaking car Bluebird & manuscripts by Wordsworth—saved from export, damage or decay by the fund. Until Feb 26. Mon-Sat 10am-4.30pm, Sun 2.30-5.30pm.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
St Martin's Pl, WC2 (930 1552).

Helmut Newton: Portraits. Major retrospective includes such famous faces as Elizabeth Taylor, Mick Jagger, Mickey Rourke & Charlotte Rampling. Until Feb 12. £1, concessions 50p.

Alice Springs Portrait Photographs. Alice Springs is the pseudonym of Mrs Helmut Newton. Her studies of David Bailey, Anthony Burgess & others provide a fascinating contrast to the main exhibition. Until Feb 12.

Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 10am-6pm, Sun 2-6pm.



Classics

BARBICAN HALL.

EC2 (638 8891, CC).

Shostakovich: music from the flames. A retrospective in which Rostropovich conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in all 15 symphonies. Dec 1, 8, 15, 7.45pm, Dec 11, 7.30pm.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Antal Dorati conducts two concerts in the Schubert-Mendelssohn series. Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Dec 3; Schubert's *Symphony No 8* & Mendelssohn's *Symphony No 3*, Dec 5; 7.45pm.

City of London Sinfonia & Richard Hickox Singers. Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by Richard Hickox. Dec 4, 7.30pm.

The Glory of Christmas. London Concert Orchestra, with choir & soloists, give two concerts of seasonal

Chorus. Dec 4, 10am-10.30pm.

Goldsmith's Choral Union, English Chamber Orchestra. Handel's *Messiah*. Dec 5, 7.30pm.

Messiaen at 80. Kent Nagano conducts the London Philharmonic & Choir in Messiaen's *St François d'Assise*, the first British performance of the complete work, semi-staged by Michael Rennison. Dec 10, 5pm.

Hospitals' Christmas Carol Concerts. Charles Farncombe conducts massed choirs from London hospitals. Dec 11, 3pm, 7.30pm.

Philharmonia & Chorus, Choir of King's College, Cambridge. Stephen Cleobury conducts Vivaldi, Britten, Prokofiev, Delius & carols for choir & audience. Dec 20, 7.30pm.

ST JOHN'S

Smith Sq, SW1 (222 1061, CC).



Opera

ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA

London Coliseum, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (836 3161, CC 240 5258).

The Mikado. Revival of Jonathan Miller's lark production, set in an English hotel in the 20s. Bill Oddie joins the cast as Ko-Ko & Alfred Marks as the Mikado, with Bonaventura Bottone as the dapper Nanki-Poo. Nov 25, 29, Dec 1, 3, 8, 10 (m & e), 15, 19, 21, 23, 30.

The Making of the Representative for Planet 8. Philip Glass's latest opera, based on Doris Lessing's 1982 science fiction novel of the same name, produced by the Japanese director Minoru Terada Domberger. Nov 30, Dec 2, 7, 9, 13, 16.

Christmas Eve. David Pountney produces Rimsky-Korsakov's fairy tale opera, based on a short story by Gogol



London Contemporary Dance at Sadler's Wells. Olivier Messiaen is given 80th birthday celebrations on the South Bank, and Franca Squarapino designs *Rigoletto*

ROYAL ACADEMY

Piccadilly, W1 (439 7438).

Toulouse-Lautrec: The Complete Graphic Works. Between 1891 & 1901 Toulouse-Lautrec produced 30 posters & approximately 330 prints of life in Parisian café society. Not to be missed. Until Jan 4.

Henry Moore. Major retrospective of Britain's greatest 20th-century sculptor with over 180 exhibits laid out by decade. Until Dec 11.

Daily 10am-6pm. £3, concessions & everybody Sun until 1.45pm. £2.

TATE GALLERY

Millbank, SW1 (821 1313).

David Hockney: A Retrospective. Provocative collection of paintings, drawings & illustrated books, as well as collaborative work in stage design. Until Jan 8. Mon-Sat 10am-5.50pm, Sun 2-5.50pm. £3, concessions £1.50.

music. Dec 6, 7.45pm, Dec 11, 3pm.

English Chamber Orchestra. Stephen Cleobury conducts *L'Enfance du Christ* by Berlioz, with King's College Choir. Dec 17, 7.45pm.

FESTIVAL HALL

South Bank Centre, SE1 (928 3191, CC 928 8800).

Berlioz/Messiaen. David Atherton conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in two programmes juxtaposing the music of the two composers. (See also Westminster Abbey.) Messiaen's *L'ascension*, Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* & *Harold in Italy*. Dec 3, 7.30pm. Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi*, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Dec 18, 7.30pm.

The Beethoven Odyssey. Nine Symphonies in one day with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, & London Symphony Orchestra &

The Sixteen give three concerts of Christmas music from Medieval & Renaissance Europe, conducted by Harry Christophers. Dec 14, 15, 22, 7.30pm.

Orchestra & Choir of St John's. John Lubbock conducts Corelli, Albinoni, Britten, & carols for choir & audience. Dec 21, 7.30pm.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

SW1. Box office: Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, SE1 (928 3191, CC 928 8800).

Berlioz/Messiaen. To mark the 80th birthday of Olivier Messiaen, David Atherton conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in three concerts of his music juxtaposed with works by his compatriot Hector Berlioz. The choral work *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*. Dec 8, 8pm. The orchestral piece *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*. Dec 15, 8pm. *The Childhood of Christ* by Berlioz, Dec 22, 8pm.

which has a seasonal theme. Cast includes Cathryn Pope, Edmund Barham & John Connell; Albert Rosen conducts. Dec 14, 17, 20, 22, 29, 31.

ROYAL OPERA

Covent Garden, WC2 (240 1066/1911, CC).

Manon. Rumanian soprano Leontina Vaduva sings Manon, with David Rendall as des Grieux. Nov 26, 29, Dec 2.

Rigoletto. Spanish director Nuria Espert stages a new production, with Brent Ellis as Rigoletto, Neil Shicoff as the Duke of Mantua, June Anderson as Gilda. Dec 8, 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29. **FEATURE ON P60.**

Semele. Charles Mackerras conducts this revival of John Copley's production, with Yvonne Kenny in the title role, Kathleen Kuhlmann as Ino & Juno, Christopher Robson as Athamas, Anthony Rolfe Johnson as Jupiter, Peter Rose as Cadmus. Dec 22, 28, 30.

The capital list

Dance

London Contemporary Dance Theatre. Programme 2: *Bottom's Dream* choreographed by Jonathan Lunn to music by Mozart; *Three Dances for Trois Gnossiennes*, Christopher Bannerman's latest work, a London première; *Good Morning Monsieur*, a world première, commissioned from French choreographer Daniel Larrieu; *Interlock*, choreographed by Darshan Singh Bhuller; *Arden Court*, a British première of Paul Taylor's classic work set to music by William Boyce. Nov 29, 30, Dec 1 (m&e—introductory matinee comprises excerpts from the above plus *Arden Court* in full), 2, 3. *Sadler's Wells*, Rosebery Ave, EC1 (278 8916, CC).

London Festival Ballet Peter Schaufuss's rich production of *The Nutcracker*. Dec 26-31 (m&e). *Royal Festival*

choreographed by Fokine; *Bastet*, the creation of Lynn Seymour (unsuitable for children); *Choros*, Bintley's free inventions of movement based on four ancient Greek dances. Dec 19-21. **Giselle** by Petipa. Dec 22, 23, 27-29. **Triple Bill:** *Concerto Barocco*, Balanchine's lyrical work set to music by Bach; *Lazarus*, Geoffrey Cauley's interpretation of the biblical story; *Pineapple Poll*, the colourful comedy, with music by Arthur Sullivan. Dec 30, 31 (m&e). *Sadler's Wells*.

Rock

Rick Astley. Squeaky-clean pop from the teen idol with the "black" voice. Dec 14. *Wembley Arena*, Middx (902 1234, CC 741 8989).

Barry Manilow. The housewives' favourite returns to see whether his fans

style. Bluesy & fun. Dec 5-31. *Ronnie Scott's*, 47 Frith St, W1 (439 0747).

The Glenn Miller Orchestra. A special Christmas programme featuring The Moonlight Serenaders. Dec 29. *Barbican*, EC2 (638 8891, CC).

After dark

Please phone to confirm details

Cartoon Cabaret. New comedy club, ready to compete with nearby Jongleurs. Saturdays. *The Plough*, Clapham Common, SW11 (0227 451818).

Go West! Lively, packed dance venue with music from the more commercial end of the indie charts. Refreshing alternative to the Acid House scene. Saturdays. *Paramount City*, Great Windmill St, W1 (437 6312).

Latin Night. Salsa from New York & Columbia gets even the most tired toes

List of the month

Unusual Eateries

Average prices given, without wine:

Bill Stickers, 18 Greek St, W1 (437 0582). Surreal décor make this a media-brat favourite. Starter, main course & bottle of wine from around £12 a head. Christmas menus from £8 to £21.50.

Busabong, 329 Fulham Rd, SW10 (352 4742). Oddest meal-time entertainment must be the Thai boxing here on Fridays. South-east Asian. £10-£15.

The Edwardian (937 7994). Restaurant-ship that sails up & down the Thames. Lunchtime cruises with set Christmas menu for £25 a head. The launch can be hired privately for £750 for four hours, excluding food.

Gallipoli, 7/8 Bishopsgate Churchyard, EC2 (588 1922). In the heart of the City, belly-dancers keep goggle-eyed yuppies



Rick Astley delights the teeny-boppers. Sotheby's sell the golden *Masquerade* hare and, among children's books, an illustration of Shock-headed Peter, Leipzig, 1848

Hall, South Bank, SE1 (928 8800, CC).

Royal Ballet. *The Sleeping Beauty*, Pepita's classic version. Dec 1, 3, 5, 9, 10 (m&e). **Triple Bill:** *Apollo*, Balanchine's first work in what came to be known as his neo-classical style, with music by Stravinsky; New Bintley, his eighth work for the Royal Ballet, with a score by Peter McGowan; *A Month in the Country*, Turgenev's story set to Chopin's music & choreographed by Frederick Ashton (special guest appearance by Natalia Makarova on Dec 6). Nov 30, Dec 6, 7, 12. *Cinderella*, Ashton's upbeat ballet with score by Prokofiev. Dec 14, 16, 21 (m&e), 27 (m&e), 31 (m&e). *Royal Opera House*, Covent Garden, WC2 (240 1066/1911, CC).

Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet. *The Snow Queen*, Bintley's popular ballet based on Andersen's fairy tale. Dec 13-16, 17 (m&e). **Triple Bill:** *Petrushka*

remember him. Dec 3, 4, 6. *Alexandra Palace*, N22 (930 3647).

Iggy Pop. The Ig, back on form with his "Cold Metal" album, promises to revive some old Stooges classics. Dec 18, 19. *Town & Country Club*, 9-17 Highgate Rd, NW5 (267 3334).

Jazz

Alan Barnes Quintet. After a three-year stint with Tommy Chase, saxophonist & clarinetist Barnes steps out on his own. Dec 6. *Purcell Room*, South Bank, SE1 (928 8800, CC).

Batey. The only London dates for this rated Cuban troupe, playing a mix of danzon, son & rumba. Dec 2, 3. *Bass Clef*, 85 Coronet St, N1 (729 2440).

George Melly. Celebrating his 15th year at Ronnie's, the erstwhile anarchist & art critic kicks off the club's "pantomime season" in his own inimitable

tapping. Occasional live acts. Fridays. *Bass Clef*, 35 Coronet St, N1 (729 2476).

Night of the Living Bass Heads. Acid House continues to make its mark in south London. Drinks at pub prices. Thursdays. *George IV*, Brixton Hill, SW2 (674 2949).

Other Events

Children's Books for sale: a fine collection of rare English & American volumes. Dec 1, 2. *Sotheby's*, New Bond St, W1 (493 8080).

Masquerade Hare for sale. The hare—an 18-carat gold & gem-set pendant—was the prize in a bizarre treasure hunt in 1979. Its location could be discovered only by following a complex series of clues hidden within the book *Masquerade*. The lucky winner now looks set to earn somewhere between £3,000 & £6,000. Dec 5. *Sotheby's*.

entranced. Turkish menu. £15-£25. **Just Around the Corner**, 446 Finchley Rd, NW2 (431 3300). There is no tariff: instead customers are expected to pay what they think the meal is worth. They pay any amount from £6 to £60. Still, it's fun guessing. International menu.

Kings Road Jam, 289a King's Rd, SW3 (352 8827). One for the more energetic. Customers climb up scaffolding to get to their alcove & adjust the volume of the music to their own liking. International menu. £5-£15.

Old Vienna, 94 New Bond St, W1 (629 8716). The staff wear lederhosen & drinks are served in hefty steins. Austrian & Hungarian menu. £15-£20. **Terrazza Est** 109 Fleet St, EC4 (353 2680). Opera-singers serenade evening diners at the "spaghetti opera". The singing is much better than the food: tinned peas have been seen. £20-£25.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

LONDON ACCOMMODATION

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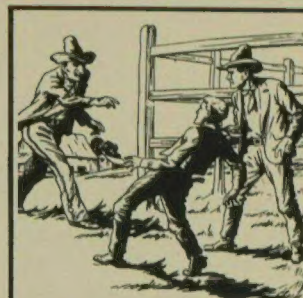
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Letter from Massachusetts Ave

BILL THOMAS, WASHINGTON

This year there have been Elvis Presley sightings in California, Texas, Tennessee and 31 other states. The King has been seen in airports, gas stations and parking lots. In fact, if you add it all up, Elvis has made more public appearances since his death than he did during his whole life.

One Florida woman is now claiming that she lived with the allegedly deceased Earl of Grace-land for two years in a trailer camp outside Miami. With so many of his diehard fans nearing retirement age, it must be comforting to think that somewhere out there the Pelvis is still moving.

Being dead has not hurt Elvis's earning power either. Last year he made just over \$15 million from record sales and other commercial ventures. That compares with \$5 million for John Lennon and only £2.5 million for T.S. Eliot, his closest British rivals.

Elvis has never rested in peace, like John F. Kennedy, who was shot by an indeterminate number of gunmen 25 years ago. History shows that you cannot kill charisma, but Elvis would have to be seen on Mars to reach JFK's status. There has never been a post-mortem Kennedy sighting, though with the late president's image so much a part of US culture extra appearances would be redundant.

A quarter-century after doomsday in Dallas, public interest in anything involving the Kennedys, from conspiracy theories to sex scandals, is holding steady. Having a new generation of Kennedy kids helps to sustain this interest in the family, but so does a new generation of Americans, as fascinated by plots to kill JFK Sr as they are with the unfolding career plans of J.F. Kennedy Junior. At 31, JFK Jr will be old enough to run for the White House himself in four short years.

Though they are often compared with England's royal family, the Kennedy's, who reproduce themselves at the rate of two additions a year, are actually not nearly so different from the average American as the tidy Windsors are from the bloke in the street. True, the Kennedy fortune puts them in an economic class by themselves, but

failings and will always find it in their hearts to forgive the Kennedys, no matter what they do. Reports of deals with organized crime figures have done little to detract from JFK's saintly aura, and not even marriage to a repulsive Greek shipping tycoon could make people question Jackie Kennedy's right to do whatever she wants. Tragedy has built-in survivor's benefits.

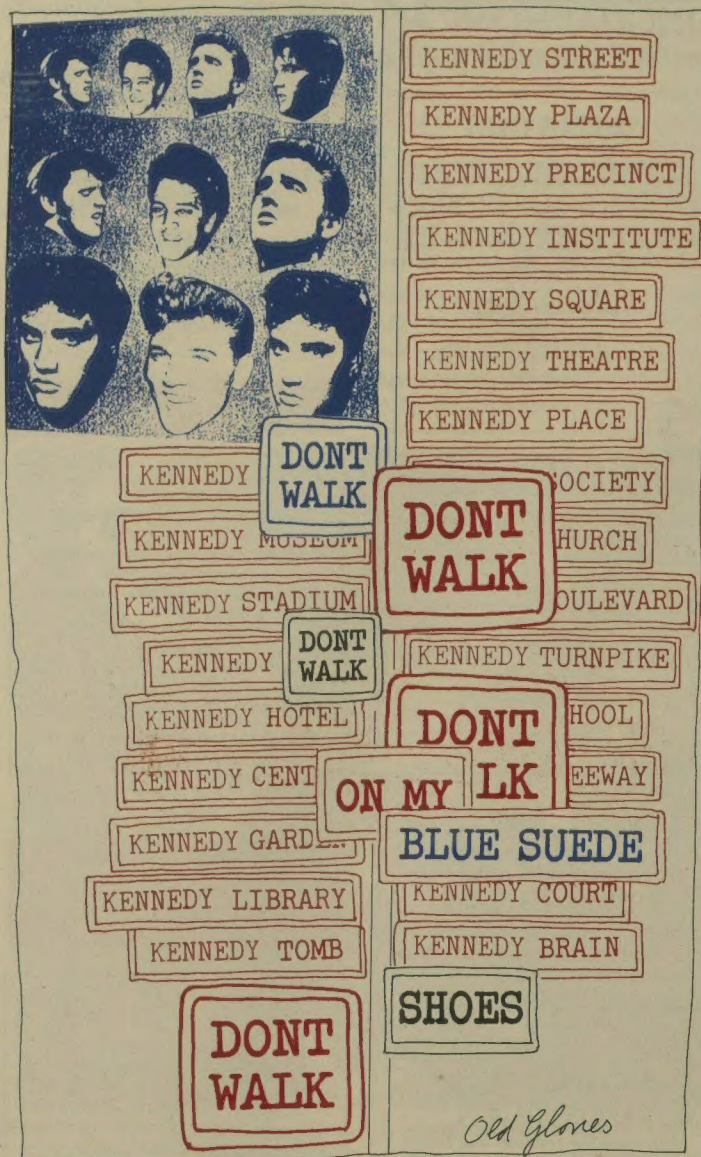
While they were alive, the only thing John Kennedy and Elvis had in common was a mutual interest in copulating with movie stars. Now, they share the limelight as the most publicised ghosts in American history. Followers flock to Elvis's baronial mansion in Memphis to cry at his final resting place, and not a week goes by without the tabloids reporting a dozen new sightings.

Kennedy may not be showing up in shopping malls, but his presence is just as hard to overlook. Airports, streets and buildings are named after him. In Boston there is the Kennedy library, the Kennedy School of Government and a Kennedy cousin, Joseph II, representing JFK's old district in Congress. In Washington there are reminders of Kennedy everywhere, from his grave on a hillside overlooking the city to the mail-order rifle that put him there, the centre-piece of the National Archives assassination collection.

Since 1965 curator Marion Johnson has been watching over the grisly material, part of the evidence assembled for the Warren Commission Report. In all, there are 3,154 items, including Oswald's passport, his diary and the shirt he wore when he was killed on live television, two days after Kennedy's murder.

"For a long time people wanted to know if we had President Kennedy's brain," said Johnson. "Of course, we don't. Actually, no one knows for certain what became of it. It was given to Robert Kennedy in 1963. But by the time Congress reopened assassination hearings, it had disappeared."

Historians have puzzled over its whereabouts ever since. But if Elvis suddenly takes an interest, it could turn up any day ■



RON STANFORD

their family history could easily have been written by Jackie Collins, if she hasn't already started.

Books about the Kennedys appear almost as often as new Kennedys do, and the anniversary year of the JFK assassination has seen a publishing orgy of histories, biographies and exposés. There is even a novel called *Libra* about Kennedy's murder from the point of view of Lee Harvey Oswald, the Mafia hitman/KGB agent who supposedly fired the fatal shot.

"After Oswald," writes author Don DeLillo, "men in America are no longer required to lead lives of quiet desperation."

Oddly enough, there has never

been anything quiet or desperate about the Kennedys, not since rum-running patriarch Joseph I became US ambassador to Great Britain in the 1930s and set his clan on a collision course with destiny.

"Maybe there's a tragic curse hanging over my family," Senator Ted Kennedy noted sadly, trying to explain how a girl drowned in the car he was driving 20 years ago. The sole surviving male out of four sons targeted for the presidency, Teddy is clearly the most accident-prone. His driving record reads like the score-card from a demolition derby.

However, Americans are more than willing to overlook human



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